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inside)

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# THE MILITARY GEOGRAPHY

OF

## AFGHANISTAN.

### PART II.

## AFGHAN TURKISTAN

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Haibak, being at the point of junction of all the best roads from Kábul, thus becomes a point of supreme strategical importance. It is as well here to note the distances—


Bamián to Haibak <i>via</i> Kara Kotai	...	...	...	Miles.
Bamián to Doshi <i>via</i> Saighán	...	...	...	140
Doshi to Haibak	...	...	...	113
				72

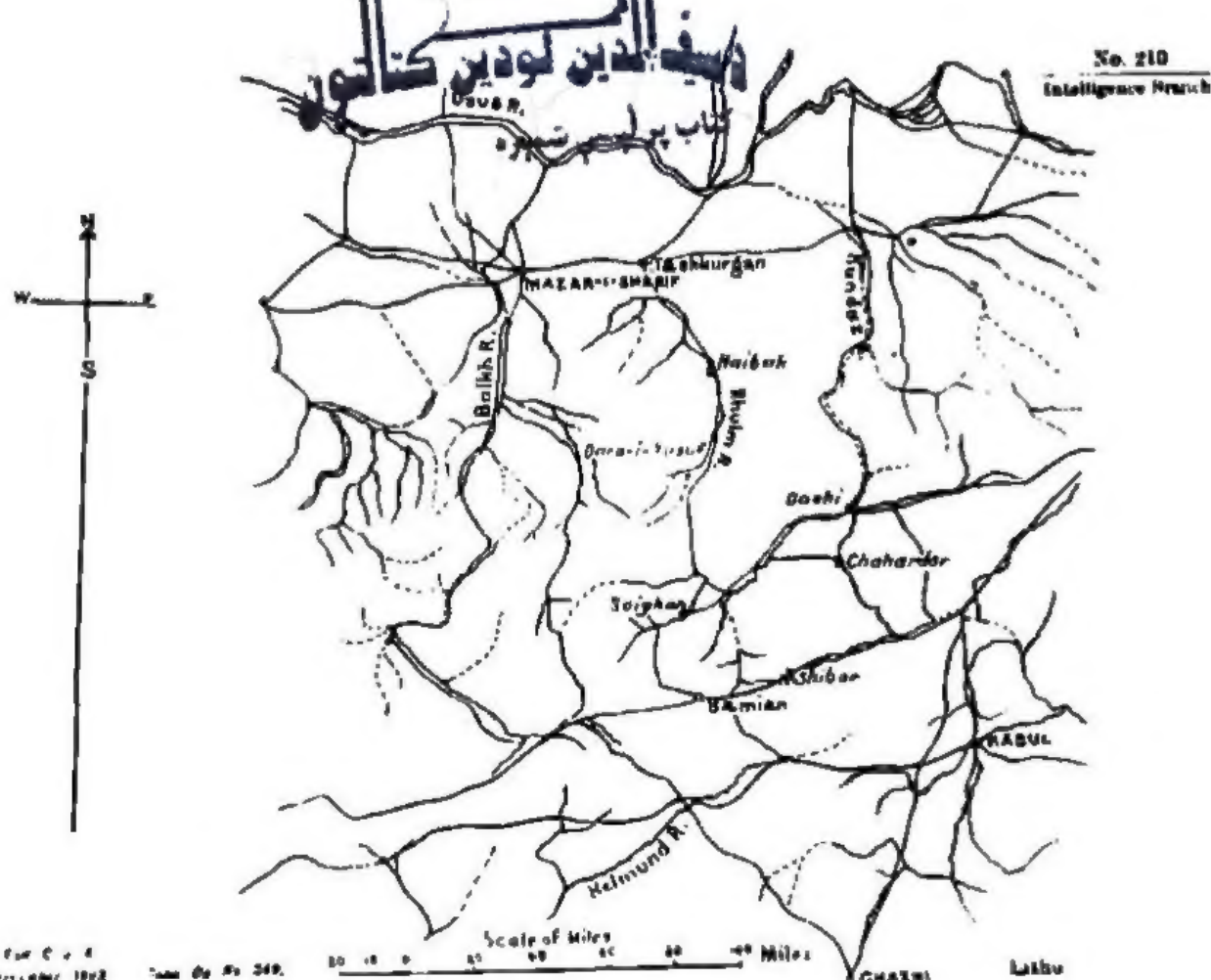
At the same time the Dara Yúsuf routes cannot be entirely neglected. From Bamián to Dara Yúsuf (Dehi) it is 155 miles (13 stages), while thence on to Mazár-i-Sharíf by the direct road it is 69 miles (5 stages). There is also the circuitous route from Dara Yúsuf by the valley of the Band-i-Amir.

Returning now to Haibak, there are from that point two roads leading to the Turkistán plain—the great *kafilá* road by Tashkurghán, and the hill road to Mazár *via* Shádián. By the first it is 73 miles, and by the second 77 miles. We may here summarize the distances by the several routes from Kábul to Mazár-i-Sharíf:—

	Miles.	Stages.
(A) Kábul <sup>Irak</sup> <sup>Haji (Gak)</sup> Bamián, Haibak, Tashkurghán, Mazár-i-Sharíf...	314	27
(B) Kábul, Shibar, Bamián, Saighán, Doshi, Haibak, Mazár-i-Sharíf	300	34
(C) Kábul, Chahárdar, Haibak, Tashkurghán, Mazár-i-Sharíf	282	24
(D) Kábul, Bamián, Dara Yúsuf, Mazár-i-Sharíf	329	29

Of the above through routes, (C) is the shortest and most direct, and it has been much improved of late years by the Amir, who intends that it shall be practicable for artillery. The best natural line is, however, (B), which is the only route that can be used at all during the winter months. It is, however, terribly circuitous, and the part along the Surkháb is very difficult. (D) is hardly a main route, and it can only be regarded as a through route in so far as it might be useful for flanking purposes and as a line of supply, thus relieving the pressure on route (A), which, with route (C), form the two great military lines of communication. The real value of route (B) lies probably in the fact that twice in its course it serves as a link between routes (A) and (C), namely, between Saighán and Doshi, and again between Bamián and Ghorband. There is another good lateral road from Doáb-i-Shah Pasand to the Ghori plain.

The following diagram  facilitates the relation of these routes to one another, while their strategic bearing on the theatre of war will be considered further on:—





As regards the routes from Turkistán to Herát, it is only necessary here to remark that, practically speaking, there are two—the southern or hill road through Sar-i-Púl and Maimana, and the northern or desert route through Shibarghán. Both meet at Kala Wali on the road to Bála Murgháb. The distance from Mazár to Herát *via* Maimana, Bála Murgháb, Kushk, and the Bába pass is about 293 miles, or say 5 weeks' march. The Shibarghán road is somewhat shorter, but water is deficient on some of the stages. In any case military operations on either line would hardly be practicable from December to March (*vide* Chapter VI).

#### STRATEGICAL FEATURES.

We may now pass on to consider the strategical conditions which appear to govern military operations in Turkistán, but I must premise that these will be more clearly understood after the perusal of the following chapters. It will, of course, be understood that strategical conditions are very largely dependent on political considerations at the moment of action.

In Chapter V the strategical bearing of the Oxus on military operations is discussed, and from what is there stated it will be seen that Kilif would almost certainly be the first objective of the Russians, whether they advanced by the left bank of the Oxus, or whether they marched direct from Jam. It is also quite certain that difficult as it might be to force a passage at Kilif in the face of organised opposition, the Afgháns would not be able to offer any effectual resistance at that point. We may also assume that, if political considerations did not peremptorily necessitate the choice of some other season, May would probably be the month selected for an advance by the Russians. Not only is the country then best suited for military operations, but any counter-movement from Kábul would then still be difficult owing to the state of the passes. We may, therefore, further assume that the only resistance to an advance that could be made is such as the Afghán garrison of Turkistán could offer; and as it is quite certain that, in the plains at all events, the Afghans could make little or no resistance, we may yet again assume that the Russians could occupy Mazár-i-Sharíf, Tashkurghán, and the whole Turkistán plain without any serious opposition. At the end of May and early in June the crops are reaped in the Hazhda Nahr, so that commissariat difficulties would also be reduced to a minimum at that season.

Under these circumstances we have to consider what course the Afghans would pursue. Obviously their best policy would be to fall back into the hill country, and gradually retire southwards, at the same time retarding the enemy's advance in every possible way, denuding the country of supplies, carrying off all transport, destroying the bridges, breaking up the roads as much as possible, employing, in short, every means to delay and hinder the offensive movements of the enemy. From Mazár to Bamián it is 213 miles, so that assuming the Russians would not be ready to advance into the hill country till the end of May, it is very improbable that they could reach Bamián till the end of June at earliest, that is to say, provided the retreat of the Afghán troops were conducted with ordinary prudence and skill. By the end of June it is reasonable to suppose that an Anglo-Afghán army would be in a position to render aid to the retiring troops; and, as will be pointed out hereafter in Chapter II, the Bamián position is by no means a bad one for resisting the attack of superior forces. Strategically the position is excellent, while in a tactical sense it has this great advantage, that it limits the number of men who can by any possibility be brought into line of battle. Of course there undoubtedly are many positions in the hills between Bamián and Turkistán which offer still greater advantages; for instance, Haibak is strategically a superior position, while for an army of 20,000 men the Paikún Dara position (*vide* Chapter III) is tactically an admirable one for giving battle; but it seems almost certain that at any point so far in advance we should be fore-stalled by the enemy, and consequently it would be unwise to adopt any plan of action which embraced so extensive a programme as the occupation of the whole hill country. What we should, however, endeavour to do is to discourage all fighting in the Turkistán plain, to ensure the steady retirement of the Afghán forces on Bamián, and to take care that we ourselves anticipate the enemy in the Bamián position. On

the other hand, if the Russians were allowed to occupy Bamián, they would obtain the immense strategical advantage of being able to advance either by the Maidán line (Irák and Haji Gak passes) or the Ghorband line (Shibar pass), while the alternative would be forced upon us of either splitting up our forces to watch both lines, or of concentrating as far back as some point east of the Paghmán range, that is, between Charikár and Kábul, thus yielding to the enemy the free use of still another good route, that by the Chahárdar pass.

Under these circumstances it might be useful to point out how the Afghán retreat from Turkistán could best be conducted. The troops from Maimana and Sur-i-Púl, say 3,000 men, should make at once for the Dara Yúsuf by way of Ák Kupruk, and having gained that haven of safety should retire as circumstances dictated either by way of Walishán or by way of the Kára Kotal. The small garrisons of Andkhai and Shibargán would also probably make for the Dara Yúsuf or possibly would join the Hazhda Nahr garrisons (Ákchú, Takht-i-Púl, Mazár-i-Sharíf). These latter would retire into the hills either towards Shadián or by way of Tashkurghán, while the Tashkurghán garrison would, of course, fall back towards Haibak. Thus ultimately the Afghán Turkistán army would converge into two groups, probably about 4,000 men concentrating on Dara Yúsuf, and about 6,000 concentrating towards Haibak. Columns of this strength could on either line offer considerable resistance even to a European foe, as the nature of the country through which these columns would be retiring lends itself in a marked manner to guerilla warfare. Further than this it is useless to indulge in speculation, and the only point which it is necessary to bear in mind is that under present conditions it is impossible to prevent an occupation of the plain country, and that the best we can hope for is that the Afghán retirement may be so conducted as to render it possible for us to anticipate the Russians in the Bamián position. The Hindú Kush group of passes (Chahárdar to Khawak) have not the same importance, as the proper manner of observing and guarding them is by a vigilant defensive attitude on the south side of the great mountain range. Moreover, these passes open considerably later than the Shibar, and therefore need not be so immediately considered. A careful study of the region most decidedly leads to the conclusion that our first care and our primary objective should be Bamián, which it is of the utmost importance to deny to an enemy.

As regards the country between the Hazhda Nahr and Maimana, it would seem that this tract is strategically important only to the invader, as it would be for him the great lateral line of communications between his two main lines of advance—the Oxus line and the Herát line.

The country east of Turkistán, that is Kataghán, need not be considered here, as it can have but a very minor effect on the Turkistán theatre of war, though it would probably be advisable for the small Khánábád garrison to fall back on Doshi and the Hindú Kush passes by way of Baghlán and Ghorí, or, possibly better still, by Narín.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE BASIN OF THE SURKHÁB OR KUNDÚZ RIVER.

The great drainage channel known first as the Surkháb, afterwards as the Kundúz river or the Áksarai, takes its rise in that lofty watershed called by us the Hindú Kush and Koh-i-Bábá. Its main sources lie in the districts of Bamián, Saighán, and Kámard. The streams watering these three districts unite at Dóab-i-Mekhzari, and lower down, in Doshi, are joined by the river which drains Andaráb. Thence the Surkháb flows through the districts of Ghorí and Baghlán, where it is joined by the important stream which drains the Narín valley. So far the river is always called the Surkháb or Ghorí. It now enters Kataghán, where it receives the Turki name of Áksarai, while from Kundúz onwards to the Oxus it is generally known as the Kundúz river.

I may here remark that of the whole of this basin it is only the districts of Saighán and Kámard which belong politically to Turkistán. Bamián belongs to Kábul, and the rest is within the administrative area of Badakhshán. Geographically and strategically, however, the districts of Andaráb, Doshi, and Ghorí are very intimately connected with Turkistán, as some of the most important routes to Kábul from Turkistán lie through those districts. I have therefore preferred to describe the upper part of the Surkháb drainage, that is, as far down as Ghorí, in the part of this work devoted to Turkistán. I may begin this survey by some allusion to the great range which rears its snowy peaks above the sources of the Surkháb. This range is part of that great backbone of Asia which forms the watershed between the Oxus and the rivers that flow towards the Indian Ocean. From the Khawak pass to the Shibar pass this range is called the Hindú Kush. Westwards it becomes locally known as the Band or Koh-i-Bába. The Hindú Kush in its length of about 160 miles is traversed by about 15 recognized passes, but a third of these are only foot-paths, and about half a dozen are practicable only for camels of the country, *yabus* and mules. The most important of these are the—

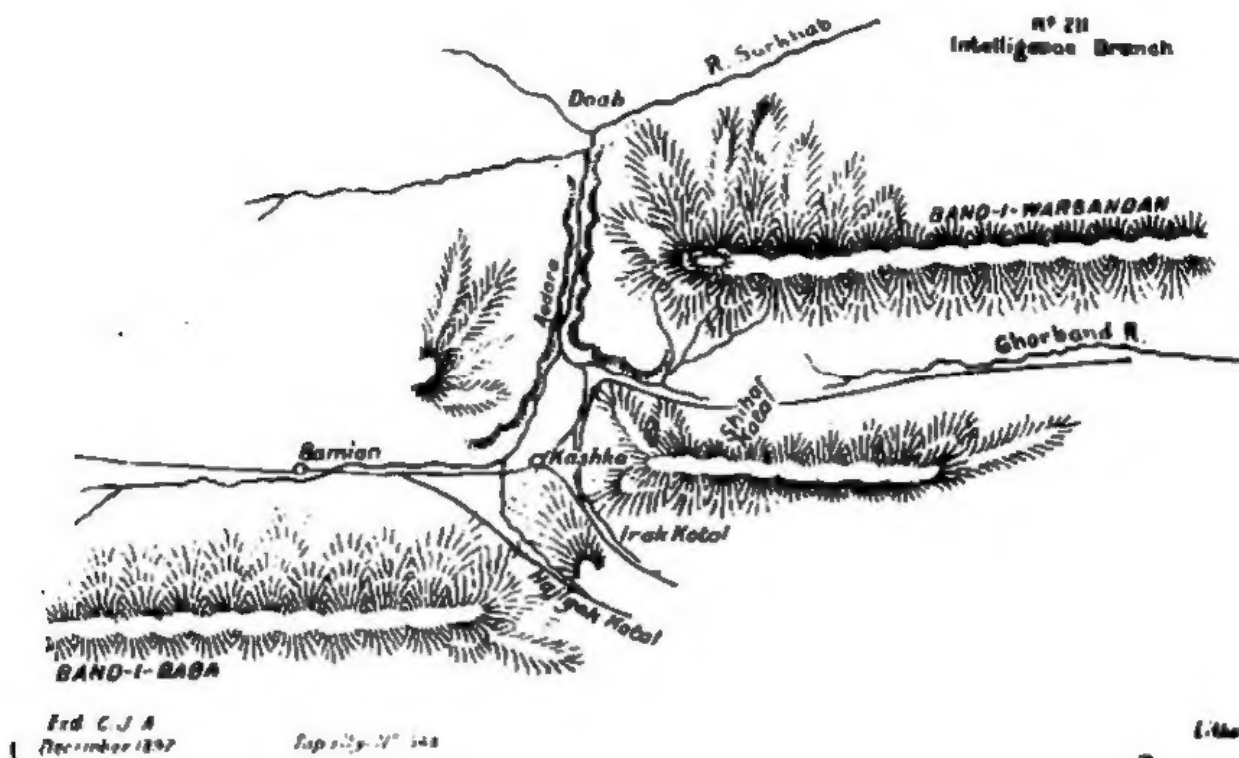
Khawak.		Kaoshán.
Bájgáh.		Walián.
Chahárdar.		

Of these, the Khawak leads to the head of the Andaráb valley, and being a very circuitous route would scarcely under any circumstances be used as a route between Kábul and Turkistán.\* The Bájgáh, Kaoshán, and Walián all lead into Khinján. Of these the Kaoshán is the best, and was formerly considered the main road, but it has now been superseded by the Chahárdar, a road which has been regularly laid out under the present Amir's orders. It was unfinished in 1886, but it is intended to be made practicable for artillery. The Chahárdar leads from Ghorband to Dahan-i-Iskar on the Surkháb, and is now the route that one would ordinarily select if crossing the Hindú Kush. It may be noted here that the Hindú Kush is only passable from May to November, and that on account of the difficulty of crossing unbridged streams, the roads are not considered fully open *till the end of June*. The passes are about 15,000 feet high, and the Hindú Kush is hereabouts a distinct single range or ridge. At its western end it abuts on the deep gorge of the Surkháb, and its main axis is deflected southwards, forming a depression which is the terminal western watershed of the Ghorband valley. Over this depression passes the Shibar pass, which is the main route from Ghorband to Bamián. The axis of the watershed again turns westwards, and now becomes known as the Band-i-Bábá, at the eastern end of which are the two depressions known as the Irak

\* The Amir is said to be making a road from Andaráb to Badakhshán. This, when completed, will make the Khawak pass important.



and Haji Gak passes leading from the Maidán district of Kábul to Bamián. The sketch below illustrates this curious overlapping formation.



It will be observed that the Hindú Kush passes all lead towards Ghorí, while the Shibar and the passes over the Band-i-Bábá lead to Bamián, and thence through Saighán and Kámará to Haibak.

The subject of these passes and the great range they cross will more fitly be dealt with in a separate chapter, which will be included in Part IV (Kábul Province), and I have intended to refer to them here so far only that their bearing on the general topography of the Surkháb basin may be understood.

I will now take district by district, beginning with Bamián and ending with Ghorí.

#### BAMIÁN.

The district of Bamián is the only part of the Kábul Province north of the great range. It comprises (i) the valley of Bamián and its affluent glens, all draining to the Surkháb; (ii) the sub-district of Yak Walang (*vide* Chapter III), which is west of Bamián, and is drained by the Band-i-Amír river; and (iii) the Dai Zaogi country, which belongs geographically to the Hazárajat. We are here only concerned with Bamián. This district lies between the Koh-i-Bábá and the Koh-i-Ghandak, extending from the Karghanatú glen in the west to the Kalu sub-district in the east. The whole of this tract is occupied by Hazáras, except the valley proper of Bamián, where there are about a thousand Tájik families. The total population is reckoned at 4,300 families, of which three-fourths at least are Hazáras. There is a good deal of cultivation in the district, wheat and barley being grown. The surplus available has been reckoned at 500 maunds *álá* and 1,900 maunds barley; but, besides this, grain could be brought from the Dara Yúsuf if it were contemplated to form a depôt of supplies in Bamián, and there are sufficient water-mills to grind the wheat so collected. Sheep are abundant, and *ghí* can be obtained from Bésud. The pack animals of the district are *yabus* and bullocks. There are no camels. There is no town in the district, and the Hákim resides in a small fort about the middle of the valley known as Kala Sarkári. It is nearly opposite the great rock cut statues known as the "Blut-i-Bamián." South of Kala Sarkári there is an excellent camping ground on a plateau known as the Dasht-i-Sarkár, which is watered by a *karez*.

Colonel Maitland in 1885 traversed the whole of the Bamián district, so that we have a very complete knowledge thereof. Looking from the Kham.

Kotal (11,420') between Yak Walang and Bamián, he describes the general aspect of the country as bleak and barren, the Bamián valley lying in a deep hollow before him to the east between the snowy heights of the main range on the right and the Koh-i-Ghandak on the left. The road from the kotal runs across the drainage of several large inhabited glens, all draining towards the Bamián valley, which is reached at about 30 miles from the Yak Walang watershed. The valley is here running from west to east, only about half a mile wide, between high hills. Half a mile lower down one strikes the Kábul-Turkistán road, a broad track on the north side of the valley. The road is very good all the way, keeping close to the hills, which are rocky. Broken cliffs of conglomerate 250 to 400 feet high abut on the valley. These cliffs are honeycombed by caves, and amongst them are the niches in which the famous figures stand.\* Forts, or high walled villages, are scattered up and down the valley, but there is no central agglomeration of houses which could be called the town of Bamián. The stream is shallow in the autumn, and only a few yards wide. From Bamián itself three important roads diverge, the one mentioned above from Yak Walang, that to Turkistán, and the road eastwards down the valley. The latter at 7 miles reaches the mouth of the Panjfilán glen, up which is the road to the sub-district known as Kálú, and thence to the Hájí Gak pass. Two and a half miles lower down, near the ruins of Zohák, the road leaves the valley, and ascends a spur to the Kashka Kotal, which is the top of the ascent to a plateau, where the roads to the Shibar and Irák passes divide. It will thus be seen that all the roads from the three great passes to Kábul, namely, the Shibar, Irák, and Hájí Gak, unite near Zohák, and the strategic importance of the position fully accounts for the ancient prestige of that ruined fortress. Just below Zohák, or rather below the mouth of the Pai Muri glen, the main valley turns abruptly to the north, and becomes a narrow defile enclosed by cliffs. This defile is practicable only to men on foot, and is consequently useless for military operations. It will be seen from the above how important Bamián is strategically. A force there would be on the main route by the Kara Kotal to Turkistán, and would cover the Koh-i-Babá group of passes in the most effective manner possible.

#### SAIGHÁN AND KÁMAUD.

These two small districts of Turkistán are mountain valleys north of, and parallel to, Bamián, both draining into the Surkháb river; the Kámaud river at Doáb-i-Mektari, the Saighán a few miles above. Their importance lies in the fact that the main road from Bamián to Tashkurghán lies through, or rather across, them. After leaving Bamián, the road passes through the Sokhdar villages, and at five miles it enters the defile of that name. This defile is over four miles long, and in places only about 50 yards wide. Its sides are generally impracticable. At nine miles the ascent of the Koh-i-Ghandak spurs may be said to commence. The crest is reached at Kotal Katar Sum (10,920'), 18 miles from Bamián; the road then descends a narrow ravine, and at 35 miles debouches into the Saighán valley near Saraiak. There is a good alternative road to this which runs parallel to it about 3 or 4 miles to the west through Gumbut, and over the Chap Kolak Kotal. This fact is important, as in military operations both would undoubtedly be used, and no great difficulty would be experienced even with guns. There is easy communication between the two roads at the crest of the range, and infantry could easily traverse the high ground on either side of or between the ravines, in which the roads for the most parts lie. Besides these two roads there are several tracks over the Koh-i-Ghandak said to be practicable for hill camels, and these would doubtless have to be watched by any force defending Bamián.

The Saighán valley runs generally from west to east. There is neither cultivation nor population below Bamiáni, but above it is about half a mile wide, is well cultivated, and has many orchards and villages. A considerable stream runs down the valley, which is enclosed between hills more or less scarped, and generally inaccessible. The valley contains about 800 families, mostly Tajiks. The general elevation may be taken at 6,000 feet. From Saighán there are several

\* These figures, of great interest to archaeologists, were measured by Captain Tallbot, and a brief description, with sketches, sent to the *Archæological Journal*. The figures are all Buddhas, the largest being 180 feet high, and therefore the biggest statue in the world.

roads to Kámard; that most used starts from some way up the valley above the entrance of the Bamián roads, and crosses a high plateau by the Dandán Shikan (Tooth-breaker) pass. East of this a road leaves the valley at Khwajagán, and goes over the Nál-Farsh pass to the Dasht-i-Safed; this is the shortest road to Bájjáh in Kámard, whence leads the road to the Kara Kotál pass, over which is the main *kafilá* route to Turkistán. A third road known as the Maidának starts from the western end of the Saighán valley. The Dandán Shikan road is that most used by *kafilas*, but the Dasht-i-Safed road is also sometimes used. The Maidának road crossing a very high pass is seldom or never used. Besides the three roads above mentioned, a new road has lately been made down the Saighán valley over the Kalich Kotál to Doáb-i-Mekzari, and thence through the defiles of the Surkháb to Ghori. This road is now so far good that in 1889 the Amír with his whole camp marched into Turkistán by this route. It is, however, very circuitous. On the whole it is thought the Dasht-i-Safed road offers the best line for troops. The watershed is lower than on the other roads, and guns can be taken without much difficulty, while the Dandán Shikan descent into Kámard is extremely troublesome. There is a fall of 2,800 feet in  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles. It should be understood that a great part of the watershed between Saighán and Kámard is not a ridge, but a plateau known as the Dasht-i-Gazak. This plateau is about 18 miles long from west to east, and is in places 6 miles broad. There is unfortunately no permanent water on it. The descents on the Kámard side are much worse than those on the Saighán side.

The Kámard valley is very deep, and is walled in by tremendous inaccessible cliffs, especially on the north side. Its bottom (5,500') is level, fertile, and well cultivated. Its inhabitants are all Tajiks, and number about 400 families. The river is from 12 to 20 yards wide, rapid and deep. The valley, like that of Saighán, produces much fruit, but comparatively little grain, and the people have to exchange their rice for corn from Dara Yúsuf and Walishán. There are no camels and few sheep, but cattle are numerous, as also *yabús*. Sar-i-Púl, near the foot of the Dandán Shikan, may be called the chief village. From Kámard a road leads westward up the valley to Walishán and Dara Yúsuf, while northwards there are two important roads, the *kafilá* road, by the Kara Kotál, and a roundabout road east of this by the Kotál Nai Joshak, which offers an important alternative line. The former road, after passing through the narrow defiles of the Kámard valley, turns at about the 9th mile from Sar-i-Púl up the Madar gorge, a narrow, cliff-bound defile which is very defensible from either side, and could be held by a few companies. The gorge can, however, be turned by the Siah Reg Kotál,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles to the west, or by the Nai Joshak road above mentioned. There are other paths which lead to the head of the Kámard valley, so that on the whole it is unlikely that a superior force could be opposed for long in the neighbourhood of Kámard. At the same time Kámard does offer a good position for delaying an enemy, as, if the Siah Reg Kotál and the Madar-Bajjah gorge were held, an enemy would be almost forced to use the circuitous Nai Joshak road. The village of Madar is  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the Kámard river, and is about 6,000 feet above the sea. From Madar to the Kara Kotál it is about 7 miles with a rise of over 3,600 feet, the *kotál* being 9,620 feet above sea. All difficulties seem to lie in the last two miles, in which the road rises 1,500 feet. The road is up a steep and narrow gorge, encumbered by fallen rock and boulders. Colonel Maitland says of it:—

This is a very stiff pass, and it appears impossible to materially improve the road. Guns have been frequently taken over by the Afghans, but with an expenditure of time and labour which might have been more advantageously employed in making a new road on a better line.

For a description of the route onwards to Haibak, the reader is referred to Chapter III.

As already described, the waters of Bamián, Saighán, and Kámard unite at Doáb-i-Mekzari to form the Surkháb river, and it may be useful if I here trace the course of the Surkháb as far as Dabán-i-Iskár. I may first mention that above Doáb the Bamián or Surkháb river is locally known as the Aodara. It is for the most part lined by lofty, inaccessible rock-cliffs, which occasionally contract the stream to a width of 20 yards. The bed of the stream



is a succession of small rapids and waterfalls. By crossing and recrossing about twenty times, which can be done only at low-water, an unshod horse might be taken as far up as Bāghak (6 miles), but beyond that the gorge is quite impassable, except for men on foot by climbing, and not even that in the flood season. On this subject Major Peacocke says: "To make a road up the Andara for even a lightly equipped infantry column during military operations would be quite unfeasible; to make a road even as a civil operation in peace time would be a heavy undertaking." Again—"Viewed as a possible line for a railway passing over the Shibar and down the Surkhāb, as far as the cutting and tunneling is concerned, the Andara could not be pronounced an impassable line," but from Buloka to Doāb (33 miles) the work would be of the heaviest description, and the general gradient 1 in 44, which could not be much reduced by winding owing to the narrow nature of the gorge.

From Doāb down the river as far as the Tāla plain (20 miles) the valley is bordered on the left by vertical cliffs with a high talus of débris at the foot. The crests of this cliff are quite 1,500 to 2,000 feet above the river. Occasional spurs project to the river, and form ridges which have to be crossed by the road. The first village on the road is Barfak (14 miles from Doāb). At Tāla the valley opens out into a plain about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles long by  $1\frac{1}{2}$  broad at its widest part. Here about 1,000 Hazāra families reside, and a certain amount of supplies would doubtless be obtainable, besides horses and ponies. So far the river is usually fordable in the dry season, and the road could easily be made fit for guns. But from Tāla to Dahan-i-Iskār, 25 miles, the road in 1886 was not practicable even for laden camels at many places. It is believed, however, that since then a good road has been constructed the whole way, and it is known that the Amir marched down this road on his way to Turkistán in 1889. At Dahan-i-Iskār (2,886') the Surkhāb valley is  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile wide, and bounded by high irregular hill slopes destitute of vegetation. The river is about 75 yards wide, and is only passable at the regular fords even in the dry season. Dahan-i-Iskār is a most important point, as here the Chahārdar route strikes the Surkhāb; here, too, the Dara Kāiān comes in; this is the only important tributary on the left bank below the Kāmard junction. From here also the *kafilā* route *viā* Dahanā makes its way to Ghori.

#### ANDARĀB AND KHINJĀN.

These are two small districts of Badakhshān now united under one Nākim. They comprise almost the whole of the long valley of the Andarāb from its head near the Khawak pass to Doshi, a few miles above the junction with the Surkhāb. It is described as a pretty valley, from half to three quarters of a mile in width, with many villages and orchards. Its large stream falls into the Surkhāb just, where the latter coming from the opposite direction turns north to break through the hills. Practically the valleys of the two rivers together form one long narrow trough extending for 90 miles from the Khawak pass to Dahan-i-Iskār. The population of this valley is Hazāra to the west and Tajik to the east. The upper or eastern division of the valley is known as Andarāb; the western division from Dasht-i-Kalat downwards as Khinjān. The population of Khinjān is reckoned at 930 families, all but the people of Gazan being Hazāras. In Andarāb, including its tributary glens, the population is put at 2,590 families, of which over 2,000 are Tajiks. The valleys and glens are very fertile, and in good years a considerable amount of supplies can be collected. Colonel Maitland estimated that with sufficient notice 1,200 maunds of *ātā* and rice and 2,000 maunds of barley might be collected. Very good donkey transport is available in the district.

The climate of Khinjān (altitude 3,100') is comparatively mild in winter. Snow is never more than a foot deep, and does not lie long. Andarāb has, however, a more severe winter. The river of Andarāb is generally fordable from September till April.

The passes over the Hindū Kush are described elsewhere (*vide* Part IV), so but little reference will be made to them here. It will be convenient if I now describe the Andarāb valley from its head down to Doshi. The most easterly of

the passes over the Hindú Kush proper is the Khawak. This pass, 11,240 feet high, is considered practicable for camels. It was used by Taimur Lang, who carried his guns over on camels. The road after descending to the river runs down the bottom of the valley, or rather glen, which is here known as Pashai. The main valley is only one or two furlongs in width, while the hills on both sides are high, steep, and almost impracticable even for infantry. The river, though here shallow, is not easy to cross on account of the current and the rocks and boulders. At Sangharán the Murgh glen joins in on the right, and the main valley opens out considerably. Up this Murgh glen is the road to Nárin and Khánabád (93 miles distant);\* also to the Sháhshán and Kásán valleys of Andaráb, by which there are said to be roads into Khost. A few miles further on the valley widens to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  or 2 miles, and here is Banu (4,700'), the principal village in Andaráb (300 families), and the residence of the Hákím. From here there is a very direct road to Panjshir and Chárikár by the Arzu Kotal, but it appears to be a mere goat track.† It may be mentioned here that between Arzu and the Khawak there are some half dozen passes across the Hindú Kush, but none are of special military importance, and they are little better than foot-paths. From Banu to Yuch, the next village of any importance, it is 14 miles. The road is very good in parts, bad in others, but a few days' work would make it practicable for wheels. The river is generally unfordable, but there is a bridge at Banu, and another below. Near Yuch the Kush Dara road strikes off to Nárin. It is believed to be fairly easy, and is used by travellers between Nárin and Khinján. At Yuch one enters the Hazára country. From Yuch to Gazán it is 15 miles. The road is fairly good, and could easily be improved, as no blasting would be required. At 4 miles pass the Bálgáh glen, up which is the road by the Bálgáh Kotal to Tutamdara near Chárikár. The kotal itself is not difficult, but the road down the Sáláng glen on the south side of the Hindú Kush is barely practicable for laden mules.‡ Bálgáh marks the limit between Khinján and Andaráb. The road now enters the part of the valley known as Khinján. The principal place is Gazan (3,100'), on a sort of plateau projecting from the spurs on the south. It is rather important strategically, as here meet the Kaoghán and Walián routes from Ghorband and the Khanigao route, which is the shortest route to Kelagai in Ghor. The distances by the two routes across the Hindú Kush are approximately—

Gazan to Burj-i-Gulján (Ghorband valley) by Walián ...	50
Gazan to Burj-i-Gulján (Ghorband valley) by Kaoshán ...	50

So that the latter is not only the better road, but also the shorter. It must not be supposed, however, that the Kaoshán in its present state is fit for the march of British troops. To make it practicable for even mountain batteries would take 2,000 soldiers at least a fortnight, if no local labour were available. From Gazan to Doshi the road presents no special difficulties, and the valley is wide, flat, and cultivated, the principal crop being rice.

#### Doshi.

This small district, at the confluence of the Andaráb and the Surkháb, lies to the west of Khinján. It extends from Kúru, on the Andaráb river, a short way towards Dahán-i-Iskár on the Surkháb, and down the valley of the Surkháb to Kelagai. It is subdivided into Kelagai and Doshi, and the total population is estimated at about 900 families. In Doshi the people are all Hazáras; in Kelagai they are Tájiks or Afgháns.

Doshi is a fertile tract, but, owing to the ravages of locusts, no grain but rice is much grown. The elevation of the district varies from 2,000 to 3,000 feet, so that snow does not lie very deep here in winter. At Doshi proper, that is near the confluence of the Andaráb and Surkháb, the valley is about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles wide, filled with rice-fields, the river in several channels. *The position is most important*, as practically Doshi covers all the routes across the Hindú Kush from the Khawak to the Chahárdar pass. Including the Surkháb valley up to Dahán-i-Iskár in this position, three roads lead northwards from Doshi, namely—(1) the old *kufitá* road from Dahán-i-Iskár by Dahána (*cide* Route No. X,

\* *cide* Route No. I, Kabul series.

† *cide* Route No. II, Kabul series.

‡ *cide* Route No. VII, Kabul series.



Kabul series); (2) the Kotal Amrutak road to Ghorī (*vide* Route No. XE); (3) the Amir's new road down the valley of the Surkhāb *viā* Kelagai (*vide* Route No. XV). The last named is possibly now the best, as it was intended to make it a gun road, which would be available at all seasons. The Amrutak road is said to be a very good one, except for scarcity of water along it. The old *kafila* road goes through hills for 20 miles, and then enters the plain of Ghorī. The highest crest crossed on this road is about 6,000 feet, while at Dabān-i-Iskār, where the road leaves the Surkhāb, the elevation is only 2,880 feet.

Colonel Maitland gives the following description of Kelagai: "This valley is about 10 miles long and 3 or 4 wide, but narrow at each end. This does not include the bare plain of the Dasht-i-Kelagai on the north-east side. The hills are high and rocky, both on the east and west. There is a good deal of cultivation. At this time of the year (September) it is mostly rice. There are five villages. The people are half Afghāns, half Surkhābi Tājiks. It would not be at all easy to move troops about over the cultivated part of the valley." There are several fairly good roads from here into Nārīn.

### Ghori.

This district of Badakhshān may be roughly said to comprise the plain of Ghorī and the country draining into it from the surrounding hills as far north as Sebtūt on the river, below which point the Baghlān district commences. The district takes its name from the ruined fort of Ghorī, which stands a prominent object in the centre of the valley. The whole of the northern half of the Ghorī plain is very marshy. Swamps, reed beds, and cultivation are intermixed, while the southern half is bare and almost waterless.

Ghorī was formerly inhabited principally by Uzbaks, but Amir Shir Ali after destroying Kala Ghorī introduced Ghilzai colonists, who now form the bulk of the settled population. The following estimate was made in 1886:—

					Families.
Tājiks and Uzbaks	...	...	...	...	450
Hazāras	...	...	...	...	3,000
Afghāns, mostly Ghilzais	...	...	...	...	2,200
TOTAL					5,650

The district produces wheat, barley, rice, millet, maize, &c. The land is good, but there is a superabundance of water in the northern half of the plain, and a deficiency in the southern half. The amount of supplies procurable in the district is large. It was calculated in 1886 that a strong Anglo-Indian brigade of all arms might be fed for a week in the district. Grass and camel grazing are abundant, whilst sheep, camels and horses, or *yabus* are numerous.

The plain of Ghorī, though surrounded by hills on all sides, is perfectly flat. Its shape is oval, rather larger at the southern end. The length of the plain may be 16 miles; the breadth 6 to 10 miles. The villages are chiefly in the northern half, particularly on the east side; they are mostly on the banks of the river, or on one of the four canals which irrigate the plain.

The river Surkhāb having ran from Deshi in a rather rocky and generally narrow valley emerges into the plain, and crosses it diagonally. It escapes from the valley through a short gap in the hills into the Baghlān plain, but it is not necessary to follow its course. The hills, which divide Ghorī from Baghlān on the north, are low and easy, and those to the east, separating it from Nārīn, are also of no great height or difficulty; but to the west is a lofty range, the Koh-i-Chongar, rising five or six thousand feet above the plain, while other high and steep hills continue along the left bank of the Surkhāb to within a short distance of Kundūz. All these hills are the eastern scarp of the great plateau described in Chapter III. The general elevation of the Ghorī plain is about 2,000 feet, so that, looking south from here, the Hindū Kush, about 40 miles distant, appears as a lofty wall towering above the intermediate hills. The





## CHAPTER III.

### THE BASINS OF THE BAND-I-AMĪR AND TASHKURGHĀN RIVERS.

Between the Koh-i-Bābā and the plain of Turkistán lies a great plateau or elevated mountain region which fills up the space between the valley of the Surkhāb or Kundūz river on the east and the Balkh-Āb or Rūd-i-Band-i-Amīr to the west. This plateau terminates in the range which overshadows the Turkistán plain, and which at its western end is known as the Koh-i-Alburz, a range whose peaks rise to 8,000 feet, and which drops almost perpendicularly to 1,000 feet, thus bringing the general elevation of the Turkistán plain. The abrupt nature of the northern scarp of this plateau is not only a remarkable military feature, but distinctly indicates the northern limit of this plateau, which may therefore be said with some accuracy to be about 140 miles long from north to south and 90 miles broad. The general elevation of the plateau is from 10,000 to 7,000 feet, and its surface, though diversified by high hills and deep valleys, may be characterized as undulating. Its appearance is barren; nevertheless there is good grazing, and a certain amount of corn is grown. The valleys are for the most part remarkably deep gashes. There are three such valleys in the south-east portion of the plateau, namely, Bamiān, Saighān, and Kāmard. These all run from west to east, and unite to form the Surkhāb river. They have, therefore, been described in Chapter II, which specially deals with the basin of that important stream. The north-east side of the plateau is drained by the Tashkurgughān river, the central portion by the Dara Yūsūf, and the south and west by the Balkh-Āb, more commonly known as the Band-i-Amīr or Band-i-Barbar river. It is the drainage area of these three rivers which are dealt with in this chapter.

I may begin by describing the basin of the Tashkurgughān river.

The ordinary *kafilā* road from Bamiān after leaving the valley of Kāmard ascends by a rough and steep approach to the Kara Kotal, where a grassy undulating plateau nearly 10,000 feet above the sea is reached. Descending from the Kara Kotal, the drainage of the Tashkurgughān stream is entered at the village known as Doāb-i-Shāh Pasand. The people here are Tatars, akin to those of Doāb-i-Mekzari on the Surkhāb, and the two places, though some distance apart, are (or were) under the same chief. The stream runs northward through a succession of narrow defiles walled by high cliffs. In places these gorges are impassable, and the road has then to climb up to the plateau, where it is not always good. Again in places the defile opens out to a certain extent, and there are villages with dense masses of orchards filling the valley from side to side. From Doāb Shāh Pasand (7,150') there are roads leading right and left to Dahān-i-Iskār and Dara Yūsūf respectively. By the former route there is an alternative road from Kāmard. All these routes are fair pack roads. To Dahān-i-Iskār it is about 48 miles; to Dara Yūsūf, 72 miles.\* At Doāb-i-Shāh Pasand the valley is about 700 yards wide. It is a cold, treeless place, but is the head-quarters of the district which extends down the valley to Rūi. This district is said to contain about 1,500 families of Persian-speaking Tatars and 1,000 families of Shekh Ali Hazāras, which together give a population of ten or twelve thousand. Wheat and barley are the only crops, but practically there is very little surplus grain. Sheep, however, are numerous, and there is very good grazing.

On the next march the road, leaving the river on the right, crosses over a spur of the plateau to the Ambar valley, and rejoins the stream at Rūi, which is another small sub-district containing some 500 families of Habash Hazāras. Rūi is well cultivated, but supplies would be scarce, and there are no trees. There is a good road from Rūi to Dara Yūsūf† which is practicable for camels, but has the drawback of a deficient water supply.

From Rūi to Haibak (3 marches) the road follows the river, except for the first few miles, where it crosses a part of the plateau on the right

\* Vide Routes 13 E, 13 F, and 11-0, Kabul series, of Afghan Boundary Commission Routes.

† Vide Route 14-0, Kabul series, of Afghan Boundary Commission Routes.

bank, and is very rough. In this part of its course numerous streams join the Tashkurghán river from the lofty Koh-i Chongar on the right, but the plateau on the left is almost waterless. The main stream is generally about 10 or 15 yards wide; it runs in a rocky bed, and is very swift and muddy, but may be considered fordable as far down as Khuram, except in spring. Beyond Khuram one is rather dependent on the bridges. At Khuram the valley is about 500 yards wide, and is entirely filled with orchards. The hills on each side are hardly accessible. Sar-i-Bágh below Khuram is a place of much the same nature. At Haibak the first important place on the road is reached.

**Haibak** (3,160')—Is a pretty little place at the south end of the beautiful and populous valley of that name. It owes its importance entirely to its strategic situation at the confluence of all the best roads from Turkistán to Kábul, whether by Kara Kotal and Bamián or by Ghori and the Hindú Kush passes. The valley of the Tashkurghán river is here about a mile wide, but lower down it expands to a width of several miles. It is rather closely cultivated, and is studded with villages surrounded by orchards. The Haibak valley, being much cut up by walls and canals, is not a good country for the mounted arms to operate in. There is a small bazaar at Haibak, and this is overlooked by the fort, which might be converted into a fairly strong post for one battalion. There is a good camping ground at Kalir Kala, and also at the place called Dasht-i-Mazár, when the crops are off the ground. The climate of Haibak is considered the best in Turkistán, and compared with that of Kábul it is more equable. There is a good deal of rain in spring, and spates occur in March and April. The harvest is at the end of June. Haibak district extends from a point about 10 miles above Haibak to Kush Bara. Above Haibak the people are mostly Tájiks; below Uzbaks. The total fixed population of the district, including Sar-i-Bágh and Khuram, is estimated at 2,500 families, say 12,000 souls, of which rather more than half are Uzbaks. The nomad population—Uzbek, Hazára, and Arab—number perhaps another 4,000 souls.

Wheat and barley are the principal crops. The total annual grain produce is estimated at 70,000 maunds, and, if this be correct, the district could feed about 3,500 troops and followers all the year round from local resources; but the annual outturn is dependent on the extent of the ravages made by locusts.

Eight miles below Haibak the valley is divided longitudinally by the Etam Koh. The river flows on the western side, while the road goes to the right, or east of it, rejoining the river at the bridge of Hazrat Sultán, 6 miles further on. Here the Tashkurghán district is entered. A few miles beyond the village the valley opens out into the small plain of Ghazni-Gak, surrounded north-east and west by high, steep, rocky, bare, and inaccessible hills. The exit from this is by a defile piercing the outer range, which defile ends in a tremendous gorge, at the mouth of which is the town of Tashkurghán and the plain country of Turkistán (*vide* Chapter IV).

The route above described is the ordinary *kafilá* route from Kábul to Turkistán, and from time immemorial has been the great line of communication for six or seven months in each year. I may here note the distances by this route:—

			Marches.	Miles.
Kábul to Bamián <i>via</i> the Irák pass*	...	...	10	105
Bamián to Haibak	...	...	11	140
Haibak to Tashkurghán	...	...	3	42
			<hr/>	<hr/>
	TOTAL	...	24	287

It may therefore be said that troops going from Kábul to Turkistán would occupy about a month on the march. It may be noted that from the Maidán valley to the Turkistán plain the only tolerably open country through which the road passes is the valley of Haibak.

**Dara Yúsuf.**—The next natural division with which we are here concerned is the valley or basin of the Dara Yúsuf, which, as already remarked, drains the central portion of the plateau. This at its southern end is known as the Walishán

\* The Amir has lately so improved the alternative Hají-Gow pass that it is now used in preference to the Irák.



valley. The high range called the Koh-i-Kájkamar to the south of Walishán is the boundary between the provinces of Kábul and Turkistán as well as the watershed of the Dara Yúsuf. The road from Band-i-Amír\* over this range is in places very narrow and bad, but it may be considered practicable for mules (*cide* Route No. XVII, Kábul series). However, from Chashma Sang Top (56 miles from Band-i-Amír) it improves greatly and is fit for all arms, for a considerable part of the way even for wheeled guns. Walishán is a fertile valley, about 2 miles wide as a rule, and bounded by steep lofty ridges. Forage is plentiful, but firewood scarce. The inhabitants are Dái Moráð Hazáras—fine hand-some men, looking more like Afgháns than Hazáras. There are about 500 families of them. Between Walishán and Dara Yúsuf the valley contracts, and the road passes through a narrow gorge called the Tangi Hassani, which at one place is only 6 yards wide. The road is still practicable for camels, but would have to be cleared for the passage of guns. The main valley of the Dara Yúsuf extends from this *tangi* down to Dehi, that is, for about 16 miles. Numerous valleys and ravines drain into it, mostly from the south-west and south-east. This part of the valley is very fertile. The wheat produced in the district, mostly it would seem on the uplands adjoining the valley, is notorious both for quantity and quality. A good deal is exported. Probably 14,000 British troops in the usual proportions might be fed here for a month on local supplies. Rice also is cultivated in the main valley, and orchards of mulberry and apricot trees are conspicuous. Forage for horses and mules is abundant; also fuel. Sheep in great numbers are procurable. The population of the Dara Yúsuf and its subsidiary valleys, including Walishán, is estimated at 6650 families or over 30,000 souls. Of these, 4,500 families are Hazáras, 1,000 Turks, and 400 Uzbeks. A few miles below Dehi the main stream is entered on the right by a ravine known as the Kushk Darn, which in the flood season is the channel for the drainage of several large ravines. Up one of these is the route to Rúi already mentioned, while up another is that by Shisha Walang to the Kara Kotal and Kámar (*cide* Routes XIV-H and XIV-F, Kábul series). This is an important route, and much used. Below Dehi the valley contracts, and the road becomes more difficult. There is a route right down the bed of the stream through narrow cliff-bound defiles, but this could only be used when the river is low; the better road lies on the heights above the right bank. Twenty-three miles below Dehi one reaches Kishindi-Pá'a, and from here to its junction with the Band-i-Amír the valley is known by the name of Kishindi. The Kishindi district belongs to Mazár-i-Sharíf; its inhabitants are mostly Kibchaks. The routes through Kishindi are, however, of minor importance, as the main *kifla* route from Dara Yúsuf to Mazár goes approximately due north, emerging into the plain by the Shadán Tangi. It may be useful to note here the following distances:—

		Miles.
Band-i-Amír to Dara Yúsuf (Kah Sukáni)	...	100
Bamian to Dara Yúsuf	...	...
Dara Yúsuf to Boinakára (Balkh-Áb valley)	...	44
Dara Yúsuf to Mazár-i-Sharíf	...	74

The main importance of the Dara Yúsuf is not so much as a line of communications but as a source of supply for troops operating in the hills between it and the Hazhida Nahr.

We may now turn to the basin of the river variously known as the Band-i-Amír or Band-i-Barkar or Balkh-Áb. The source of this river is in the curious series of lakes called Band-i-Amír on the north side of the Koh-i-Bábi in the district known as Yak Walang. From the lakes to Sulíj the deep valley of the river, though generally speaking more than 8,000 feet above the sea, is fairly populated and tolerably fertile. It then enters a series of gorges bounded by enormous cliffs, while the river becomes deep, swift, and unfordable. The road down the valley is quite impracticable for baggage animals, thus precluding the use of this line for military operations. The only importance therefore of the Yak Walang district is that it is traversed from east to west by the road between Bamian and Diolatyár, and also from north to south by the route which, starting from Ghazni, crosses the Hazáraját, and comes over the Koh-i-Bábi by a lofty pass to Band-i-Amír. Thence it is continued by the

\* In the Yak Walang district. It is a well-known Zarat near the sources of the Band-i-Amír (Balkh) river.

road above described to Dara Yúsuf and Tashkurghán (*vide* Routes XVI, XVII, XX, Kabul series). Practically June to September is the only season during which use could be made of these routes by troops. The total population of the Yak Walang district is estimated at 3,000 families of Hazáras. A considerable amount of wheat and barley is grown, and if necessary 2,000 maunds of wheat and 6,000 of barley could be collected. Yak Walang is subsidiary to Bamián. After leaving Yak Walang the river flows through the district known as Balkh-Áb, which is part of Turkistán. This district, which extends from Sulij to Tunj, is a hilly and difficult tract, but nevertheless it is fairly fertile, and a week's supplies for a British Indian division might perhaps be obtained from it, and could be transported on pack bullocks to Walishán if necessary. Grass and firewood are said to be abundant, and the large number of nomad Arabs who pasture their flocks in the district support this statement. The settled population consist of about 1,500 families, mostly Hazáras. It must be distinctly recollected that there is no military route down the valley of the Band-i-Amír. Below Balkh-Áb the river enters Tunj, a sub-district of Mazár-i-Sharíf. This is principally a grazing district, and the people, who are mostly Tajiks, own large flocks. The population is reckoned at 900 families. Below Tunj comes another sub district of Mazár-i-Sharíf, namely, Ák Kupruk, which supports, including nomads, about 1,000 Uzbek families. A small amount of supplies could be collected here, and could be made available any where down the river. From Ák Kupruk downwards to the Hazhda Nahr a road practicable for troops follows the river. There are also roads leading right and left to Dara Yúsuf and Sang Cháarak respectively, but these lateral roads are not likely to be of much use to any one, except in so far as they facilitate the collection of supplies. The road from Ák Kupruk is a good camel road, and from Ák Kupruk itself (alt. 2,345') to Mazár-i Sharíf it is only about 50 miles. The road lies on the right bank of the river. The high hills and deep gorges are now left behind, and the country becomes more open, the hills are smooth and of a grassy down-like character, traversable in almost any direction by infantry or cavalry. Seven and a half miles below Ák Kupruk the river from Dara Yúsuf and Kishíadi joins in. It is in autumn a shallow stream, 20 yards wide, but flowing, as it does in a deep gorge, is probably a formidable torrent in spring and summer. Three miles lower down the road from Dara Yúsuf (Route XVII B, Kabul series) comes in, so that from here onwards the valley of the Band-i-Amír becomes a feature of strategical importance.

After passing the Uzbek village of Kizilkand, the hills become a little more difficult, being steep and rocky near the bottom. The river, it may be observed, even in autumn is 50 to 70 yards wide and unfordable, so that practically the road lies in a defile. At Buinakára this defile opens out to a width of about 2 miles, which width is maintained for a dozen miles to the Chashma Shafán Tangi. The hills also again become low and easy, so that the ground hereabouts is suitable for the concentration of troops. This part of the valley, known as the Paikám Dara, is the Buinakára sub-district of Mazár-i-Sharíf. It contains a settled population of about 400 families, mostly Uzbaks, but is also much frequented by nomad Arabs. There is a fair amount of cultivation, and it is calculated that the district could feed a native battalion for one week. The Afgháns evidently consider this a very probable line for military operations, as in the winter of 1885-86 they formed a large depôt of supplies here in case a Russian invasion of Turkistán should compel the Afghán troops to retire into the hills.

Occasional villages dot the valley all the way to the Tangi Shafán. At Jangali a good lateral road from the east comes in, by which the Dara Yúsuf-Shádián road can be reached, while on the left bank of the river, opposite Paikám Dara, there is a valley, up which is the direct road from Mazár to Sang Cháarak and Sar-i-Púl. About 3 miles below the village of Paikám Dara is the Tangi Shafán gorge, through which the river escapes to the plain of Turkistán. The high end of the Albarz range is on the left, while on the right is a small rocky conical hill connected with the main rango by a broken ridge easily accessible to infantry. The gorge lies north and south, and is from 100 to 50 yards wide. The road is about 6 feet wide and good, with cliffs on the right and the rapid river below it on the left. The defile is about a mile



in length. A few hundred yards before reaching the northern exit of the defile is a narrow brick bridge of one arch which leads to the Balkh road. The river is here 50 or 60 yards wide; it is rapid and rocky, and is unfordable all the way to the Pul-i-Imám Bakri,  $7\frac{1}{2}$  miles below. With this defile the hill country may be said to end, and the river enters the Turkistán plain, where it is soon split up and absorbed by numerous canals.

It will be seen from the foregoing that the drainage of the plateau for the most part reaches the plains by two important outlets, the Tashkurghán gorge and the Tangi Shafán, through which defiles lead, the most important roads leading northwards into Turkistán; but as, besides these two great portals, there are others giving access to the plains, it is necessary to describe the character of the hill range bounding the plain between these defiles.

As already observed, this range rises very abruptly from the plains (1,000') to a ridge whose peaks are all over 6,000 feet above the sea, and one of which, the Shingak, rises to 7,530 feet. These hills are limestone rocks, the upper half being sheer cliff. On the south side of the range is the high bare upland country of the great plateau, above which the range does not rise to any great height. Between the gashes formed by the Tashkurghán and Band-i-Amir rivers there are two gorges, up which are roads to Málmul and Shádíán, and which give access to the plateau. West of the Shádíán Tangi the hills are much lower, but practically the range offers a perfectly defined escarp penetrable only at the points mentioned.

The road up the Málmul Tangi is practicable for camels, but not for wheeled artillery. From Mazár to the mouth of the gorge it is 13 miles, and the road, though stony, is easy. The gorge is from 15 to 30 yards wide, and the cliffs on both sides are high and inaccessible. From the gorge to the village of Málmul (4,500') it is 6 miles, and the road, which is often rocky and steep, ascends 2,175 feet in the distance. From Málmul there are practicable camel roads to Haibak (61 miles) *via* Pír-i-Nakhehr and to Shádíán (15 miles) (*vide* Route XLV, Kabul series).

From Mazár towards the Shádíán Tangi the road is open and easy for 7 miles. It then enters the Shádíán defile, which soon becomes a gorge, 20 to 40 yards wide, the sides of which are rugged cliffs of great height; but the road is practicable for all arms. The gorge offers a position that could be defended by a small force against great odds, and one that could not be easily turned. At 9 miles the gorge again becomes a defile some 60 yards wide, with high but accessible hills on the left (proper right). Shortly afterwards the road divides, one branch goes up to Shádíán (5,700'); the other is the Dara Yúsuf road (*vide* Route No. XVII, Kabul series).

It is, of course, impossible to forecast the nature of military operations dependent on unknown conditions, but the wonderfully defensible nature of the range overlooking Turkistán renders it permissible to assume that if an invader were in occupation of the plain country and the defender were in a position to contest the hills at all, that his first line of resistance would be this range. Up the Tashkurghán defile lies the best road to Kábul, and therefore naturally the main force would be based on Haibak to contest that line of advance; but as the Málmul and Shádíán Tangis both afford facilities for a turning movement, it would be necessary to place detachments on both these lines to retard and oppose such movements. Nor could the Paikám Dara (Band-i-Amir defile) position be neglected, as otherwise an enterprising enemy might threaten the defenders' communications by the line of the Dara Yúsuf.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE TURKISTÁN PLAIN.

The plain of Afghán Turkistán is a clearly defined natural feature stretching from the foot of the mountains to the Oxus, and from the Kundúz river to the sandy desert west of Andkhoi. The transition from hill to plain is well marked, and even abrupt; and the fact that this range of hills presents to the north a steep and rugged barrier, accessible only at a few distinct points, gives to the investigation of the subject considerable military importance. The length of the plain as defined above may be taken at 200 miles, while the breadth varies from 20 miles at the mouth of the Kundúz river to about 50 miles on the line Kilif-Ákehá-Shibarghán. It must be remembered that a certain portion of this plain east of a line drawn from the mouth of the Kundúz river to Khairabád comes within the political boundaries of Badakhshán; but the whole eastern part of the plain is uninhabited, save by people of pastoral tribes, and few of these remain in it all the year round. All along the Oxus is a narrow cultivable strip, but only that part below Kilif can be said to be fairly populated. (For an account of this riverain tract reference is invited to Chapter V.) South of this strip is a band of sandy desert 10 to 20 miles across. In places this desert stretches right across to the hills, dividing the inhabited portions of the plain into distinct areas; thus there is the barren tract between the Áksarai or Kundúz river and Tashkurghán; again that between Tashkurghán and Mazár-i-Sharíf; then there is the division between Shibarghán and the valley of the Andkhoi river, where there is a wide sandy undulating desert to be crossed. These sandy tracts form valuable grazing grounds for sheep and camels, and at certain seasons are full of semi-nomad people with their flocks. The best part of this whole plain of Turkistán is undoubtedly the Hazhda Nahr, or country of the 18 canals, which is more particularly described below. Finally, we have the long clearly defined escarp of the mountains which bounds the plain on the south, and stretches in one almost unbroken line from the Koh-i-Alburz, south of Ákehá, to the Kundúz river.

Four streams descending from the hills water the fertile portions of the plain. These are the rivers of Tashkurghán, the Rúd-i-Band-i-Amír or Balkh-Áb, the river of Sar-i-Pál, which flows in two streams to Shibarghán, and the Áb-i-Maimana or Andkhoi river. None of these reach the Oxus, as their waters are either used up in irrigation or are absorbed by the sands of the desert. The most important is the Band-i-Amír, which, where it leaves the hills, is unfordable even in the driest season. Very soon after entering the plains this river is carried off into 18 canals, the tract irrigated by which is known as the Hazhda Nahr, and which may conveniently be here described.

#### HAZHDA NAHR.

This tract is the heart and body of Turkistán. It is about 100 miles in length from east to west and about 25 in breadth. The cultivable area may be estimated at about 1,500 square miles, or nearly a million acres, almost the whole of which is good, well watered land, capable of bearing almost any crop. The total population is estimated at 15,000 families, say 70,000 souls, but it might well support four or five times that number. Near the centre of this plain stands the ruined and deserted city of Balkh (*q.v.*), while at its eastern and western ends respectively are Mazár-i-Sharíf and Ákehá (*q.v.*), the former of which is the capital town. The Hazhda Nahr, like other fertile portions of the Turkistán plain, is studded with villages surrounded by orchards. The canal system is in good order, and is capable of fertilizing a much larger amount of land than is at present under cultivation; and the output of wheat and barley could be doubled in almost any year if a market for the produce were assured. Besides wheat and barley, considerable quantities of rice and maize are raised. Grain being cheap and abundant, but not exportable, the people depend largely on sericulture for their profits, while tobacco, cotton, and fruit are also cultivated. Sheep are numerous, and some 10,000 camels, fit to carry loads, might be collected in the plain of Afghán Turkistán. A useful class

of *yabuz* is bred in the country, and there are Government horse-breeding establishments at Balkh and Ákehá. Altogether it may be inferred that there would be no difficulty in maintaining a large force in the Hazhda Nahr. Colonel Maitland is of opinion that two army corps, say 50,000 fighting men, might be so supported after the first year.

The climate is hot in summer, though not so hot as that of India, and malarial fever is very prevalent from June to September. The barley harvest in the plains commences at the end of May; the wheat harvest a fortnight or three weeks later. The autumn crops, principally rice and Indian-corn, are gathered in November. The winter is cold, with frequent falls of snow; but usually the snow does not lie deep. Spring is a very rainy season. The rivers are then in flood and the canals all full, while the country is often a sea of mud for weeks at a time. Snow sometimes falls as late as the beginning of April. The autumn is generally fine.

With regard to the inhabitants of the Hazhda Nahr, the Uzbaks are of course the most numerous, amounting to about half of the whole. These, with the Turkomans, Arabs, and Hazáras, make up about four-fifths of the total population, all of whom may be considered as more or less inimical to Afghán rule, and in favour of Russian annexation. At the same time it may be observed that the people are quiet and orderly, and therefore not likely to rebel without external pressure. The proportions of different races were estimated in 1886 as under:—

	Families.				
Uzbaks	...	...	...	...	7,500
Afgháns	...	...	...	...	8,000
Turkomans (Arsáris)	...	...	...	...	2,200
Arabs	...	...	...	...	1,500
Tajiks	...	...	...	...	650
Hazáras	...	...	...	...	150
Jews, Hindús, &c.	...	...	...	...	?
Total					15,000

There is a steady influx of Ghilzai Afgháns now going on, which is encouraged by the Amír, so that it is quite possible that in course of time that class may form a majority of the inhabitants—a result which will modify the political situation. The present dearth of population is accounted for to a great extent by the very severe famine and cholera epidemic of 1871-72. The Turkomans, it may here be observed, live almost entirely along the northern fringe of the Hazhda Nahr. The Arabs are semi-nomadic. Besides of the Hazhda Nahr towns, Tashkurghán, Shibarghán, and Andkhoi all belong to the plain country. They are described separately below, as also the towns of the Hazhda Nahr.

#### TASHKURGHÁN.

The district and town of Tashkurghán are the most easterly of the territories under the Governor of Afghán Turkistán. The district comprises (1) the city and the plain country around it; (2) the two small sub-districts of Ghaznigak and Pirakebir in the hills north of Haibak; (3) the small riverain settlement of Kaldár on the Oxus, containing about 60 Uzbek families. In 1886 the population of the district was estimated as follows:—

	Families.	
Ghaznigak and its hamlets...	...	1,150
Pirakebir	...	430
Tashkurghán and villages ...	...	4000
Total, say	...	5,600 or 28,000 souls.

Of these the most numerous are the Tajiks and Uzbaks; then come the nomad Arabs; and last of all Hazáras and Afgháns.



The grain production of Tashkurghán is small. There is abundance of excellent land, but not enough water to cultivate it. Fruit and vegetables are plentiful, and there are large numbers of sheep in the district. According to the Afghán officials (1885-86), a force of 12,000 Kabuli troops could be fed for one month on supplies readily procurable; this would be equivalent to about a mixed Indian brigade of all arms. This estimate is based on the fact that about 750 maunds of wheat and barley and 500 sheep are brought to market twice a week; but it must be remembered that part of the grain comes from the Hazhda Nahr as well as from Koláb and other trans-Oxus districts, so that it would not be safe to reckon on these amounts. About 12,000 camels might be obtained in the district for transport purposes.

North of Tashkurghán, between the cultivation and the Oxus, 25 miles distant, there is a wide belt of sandy desert, while on the south the Tashkurghán plain is bounded by precipitous hills rising almost perpendicularly for several thousand feet and forming a perfect barrier, accessible only at a few well marked points. The plain of Tashkurghán is as fertile as any part of Turkistán, but it is somewhat short of water. The general elevation of the plain is about 1,400 feet.

The town of Tashkurghán is the largest and richest in the province, and is the principal trade mart between Central Asia and Kábul.

It is practically an unwallled town, though it possesses an ark or citadel. It consists of a mass of orchards and enclosures with high mud walls covering a great extent of ground. The streets, or rather lanes, bordered by these high blank mud walls are only 10 or 12 feet wide, but are fairly straight, intersecting each other at right angles, and troops and guns could move through the town in almost any direction. There are six gates by which only the town can be entered, though it must be understood that the intervening walls are merely orchard walls, and not lines of defence. The bazar contains 300 or 400 shops, and there are many Hindu merchants. This bazar is a fine covered one of picturesque aspect. The houses of Tashkurghán are mostly domed, though wood for rafters is fairly plentiful, there being many *chinars* and poplars as well as fruit trees. There are no wells in Tashkurghán, and drinking water is obtained from the river through covered conduits, which take off above the town.

The citadel is of large extent, and would require a considerable garrison for its defence. The walls are weak against artillery; there is no ditch and little flank defence, and a great deal of the interior is exposed to view, so that altogether the place cannot be considered tenable against a civilized foe. In 1886 there was no garrison in Tashkurghán except *khasadars* for police duties, but there is a *chaoni* said to be capable of quartering a battalion, a battery, and a cavalry regiment of Afghán troops.

The climate is hot in summer, but it is said to be not unhealthy. The rainy season is in spring.

There is no doubt that the position of Tashkurghán is most important from a strategical point of view, as it closes the defile through which lies the main road to Kábul. Besides the roads to Kábul, Khánábád, and Mazár-i-Sharíf, there are those to the Oxus at Khist Tapa, Kaldár, and Pata Kesar, the first named being the main line of communication with Kabálian, while the last is on the road to Shirábád.

#### MAZÁR-I-SHARÍF.

This town is now the capital and commercial centre of Afghán Turkistán. It has also of late taken the place of Takht-i-Púl as the principal garrison town in these parts. The old portion of the town, consisting of the Mosalla buildings and a straggling bazar, is more or less surrounded by a thin ruinous wall quite indefensible. Around this is a dense mass of inhabited orchards and gardens which practically forms the new town. The Bála Hissar is completely hidden by orchards and has no military value. It contains the arsenal and barracks for two Afghán battalions. There is also a *chaoni* in the town, and

one year's supplies for 7,000 Afghán troops are said to be kept in stock. The bazar is a poor one, but by drawing on the whole Hazhda Nahr a large amount of supplies might be collected, probably enough to feed a British division for one month.

Colonel Maitland's tables of population give a total of 1,803 resident families for the town with its suburbs together. This does not include the floating population, so the total may be about 10,000 souls. The inhabitants are mostly Uzbaks and Pathans. The town is entirely dependent for water on the Sháhi canal. The arsenal in 1885 employed about 700 workmen, and turned out nearly everything required for the Turkistán army—smooth-bore artillery, gun carriages, muzzle-loading rifles, swords and bayonets. It also made ammunition for breech-loaders.

The town stands at an elevation of about 1,200 feet. In summer the heat is oppressive, and altogether it would not be a desirable place in which to quarter troops.

Mazár, besides being the capital of the province, is the head-quarters of an administrative division, consisting of (1) the plain country near the town watered by four canals from the Band-i-Amír river, viz., the Nahr-i-Shahi, Nahr-i-Kudar, Nahr-i-Mushtak, and Nahr-i-Siahgird; (2) the district of Shor Tapa on the Oxus; (3) the Chahárkind-i-Mazár-i-Sharíf in the hills immediately south of the town; (4) the small sub-districts of Buinakára, Kishindi, Ák Kupruk, and Tunj on the Band-i-Amír.

#### TAKHT-I-PUL.

This is the cantonment of Mazár-i-Sharíf, from which it is distant about 5 or 6 miles. It covers about a square mile of ground, and is surrounded by a loopholed wall about 20 high with towers at regular intervals. The ditch is insignificant, but the counterscarp is provided with a wall for musketry defence. The corner towers have embrasures for guns, and on the north face there is a large projecting outwork which covers the gate on that side. The north and west faces command fairly open country; but on the east face towards Mazár-i-Sharíf is a long line of orchards parallel with the wall, a substantial *sarai*, and a large walled garden, which in case of an attack would have to be destroyed or included in the defences. The garrison in 1886 consisted of two battalions, four *bairaks* (companies) of *khasadars* (military police), and 8 guns; but the place is intended to accommodate 10 battalions, 5 regiments of cavalry, and 5 batteries (Afgháns). It might hold a British-Indian division if half the men were under canvas. Takht-i-Púl, like Sherpur, might be held indefinitely against an uncivilized enemy, but could not offer prolonged resistance to good troops with artillery, although it might be made fairly secure against a *coup de main*.

#### BALKH.

The ancient and renowned city of Balkh no longer exists except as a ruin and a memory. Balkh has practically ceased to exist since Nadir Shah captured the city a century ago. Its ruin was completed by the Amír of Bokhára about A. D. 1840. The city lies in a flat plain, which extends to the Koh-i-Alburz, 12 miles to the south. This plain is watered by a number of canals which take off from the right bank of the Rúd-i-Band-i-Amír (Balkh-Áb). These canals are lined at intervals with villages, which have as a rule many orchards; but the trees are confined to the villages, and the plain is unbroken, except by numerous lofty mounds, which apparently mark the sites of ancient forts and citadels.

Balkh covers about 3 square miles of ground, and is surrounded by a ruined wall about 20 feet high. The interior, especially the southern half, is mostly a mass of ruins, orchards and cultivated enclosures mingled together. The present town consists of a mean bazar in the centre, with a few hundred inhabitants, mostly Tajiks and Uzbaks. The old Bala Hissar is surrounded by a deep and narrow ditch, but the walls have been almost completely demolished.

Balkh has a bad reputation for heat and fever, and is a place to be avoided.

### ĀKEHĀ.

The town of Ākehā, together with the cultivated country around watered by the four canals known as the Patehabāt, Magzūm, Saidabād, and Sailbur canals, forms a sub-district of the Hazhda Nahr. Ākehā itself is a walled town of about 2 miles in circumference with a lofty citadel. The defences were in good repair in 1886, but the place has no military strength. The interior of the town is almost devoid of inhabitants, the population living in the neighbouring *bāghat*. The town probably does not contain more than a few hundred inhabitants, and the total population of the sub-district is only about 2,600 families, say 12,000 souls. The district is a rich one. Rice, barley, wheat, cotton, &c., are grown, while sheep and camels are numerous. It is thought to be unhealthy, malarial fevers being very prevalent in autumn. The inhabitants mostly Turkomans and Uzbaks. Except for being at the junction of several roads, Ākehā has no military importance. There are reed beds and swampy ground in the immediate neighbourhood of the town, which would be difficult to cross in spring.

### SHIBARGHĀN.

The district of Shibarghān is watered by two branches of the Sar-i-Pul stream known respectively as the Daria Safed and the Daria Sinh. Most of the villages are in the banks of these two streams. The total population was estimated in 1886 at about 3,000 families, of which about half were Uzbaks. The Turkomans numbered about 900 families. The town of Shibarghān is a dilapidated place with a ruined wall. The ditch is still, however, a formidable obstacle. The citadel, raised high on a mound, is of considerable size, but of no real strength. The whole population, excluding that of the suburbs, is probably under 4,000, mostly Uzbaks. The garrison in 1886 was only about 400 men. The supplies available in the district may be estimated at about one-fifth of the total procurable in the Hazhda Nahr. Shibarghān is situated on one of the main roads from Herāt to Mazār-i-Sharīf, and therein lies its only importance, as in the case of a movement between those two places, a depôt of supplies would doubtless be formed at Shibarghān, to which Sar-i-Pul and Sang Chirak would contribute. It is four long caravan marches from Shibarghān to Mazār.

### ANDKHOI.

Is a decayed and dilapidated town with a lofty citadel in fairly good repair (1886). It is the capital of a small and poorly inhabited district. There is a considerable extent of fertile land round the town, but not enough water. The people dwell mostly in the *bāghāt* or orchard land surrounding the city. Besides the city and its *bāghāt*, there are only two detached villages in the district, the total population of which is probably about 12,000 souls, of whom about half are Uzbaks; the remainder Turkomans and Arabs. The area of cultivable land is about 80 square miles watered by the Andkhai river, which comes from Maimana. On entering the district this river is split up into canals. Wheat, barley, cotton, jowar, and fruit are the principal products of the district. The surplus food-grains may be estimated at 10,000 maunds per annum, which would feed an Indian division for 9 or 10 days only. Sheep are numerous. The climate is fairly healthy, but in summer the want of good water is much felt; that in the wells is unwholesome, and produces guinea-worm in those who drink it. The direct road from Karki to Maimana runs through Andkhai.

The foregoing geographical description of the Turkistān plain clears the ground for drawing certain military deductions therefrom. In the first place, it is evident that Turkistān (Afghān) offers a far better base of operations for an army than was formerly supposed, as it is quite capable of supporting a large force for a considerable period in most of the necessities of life. Water, fuel, forage, grain, and meat may at all events be relied on. Secondly, it offers



an easily attainable objective within ready reach of a Russian army. The inhabitants as a rule would welcome the invaders. The distances to be travelled are small and present no serious difficulties, and no formidable opposition is to be expected. With reference to this, it may be observed that from the Russian frontier at Bosága it is only about 110 miles to Mazár, while the distance from the Kilif and Pata Kesar ferries is only 75 and 36 miles respectively. Supposing a line of railway constructed in peace time from Chahárjui to Bosága, there is no reason why a Russian division should not be in Mazár within 10 days of a declaration of war. On the other hand, Mazár is at least 280 miles from Kábul, and separated from it by a difficult mountain region, which in winter is impassable. In three or four months from the commencement of the first advance the rail might be pushed on to Mazár itself if proper arrangements had been previously made, and then no further difficulties in maintaining a large army in Afghán Turkistán need be apprehended by the Russians. Thus we see that for the Russians the Turkistán plain offers, first, an easily attained objective; and, secondly, an excellent base for the invasion of Afghánistan. On the other hand, a British force, even supposing it could anticipate its opponents, would find itself in a false position in Turkistán, unless it possessed an undoubted superiority, enabling it to take the offensive. Its line of communications would be long, difficult, and precarious, while the nature of the Turkistán plain offers every advantage to the great numerical superiority which the enemy would presumably be able to dispose of.

It must not, however, be supposed from this that Turkistán is not worth fighting for, or that it presents no good tactical positions in which a battle might be delivered even by a numerically inferior force. Under certain conditions we might be enabled to assume the offensive, and it might then become desirable to expel the invader from Turkistán, in which case the nature of the country for the purposes of a decisive battle deserves attention. Speaking of tactical positions, Major Peacocke says:—

There certainly is a total absence of any strongly marked ridges or well accentuated ground; but this is not a necessary essential for a position. There are many sufficiently well marked swells in the plain, and the scattered villages with their clumps of trees, the numerous ruin mounds, the large canals lined with high spoil banks, the odd patches of foundation marsh, and the strips of foundation which could be effected by a few cuts of a spade would render it possible to take up a strong, though not a commanding, position anywhere almost, and facing in almost any direction within certain limits. Such a position would consist of a chain of strong points at intervals rather than a continuous line, and would possess the main element of strength in a position, *viz.*, a clear open view in front and on the flanks. \*

\* \* \* These plains are a grand country for cavalry and wheeled transport.

As regards the season for military operations, the floods and rains of spring preclude the movement of large bodies of troops before the end of April or beginning of May, and this latter month is probably the one which would, putting all political considerations aside, be selected by an invader from the north. Grass and green crops would then be plentiful, water abundant, and the weather still cool, so that the narrow desert strip between the Oxus and the Hazhda Nahr could be crossed with comparative comfört, which would not be the case a month later.

#### *References.*

Pages 15—17 of *Lecture on the Russo-Afghán Frontier*, Part II; Afghán Boundary Commission Records, Volume II, pages 50—63, 82, 101—104, 214—219, 440—450, 461—469, 484—499, 523—530; Volume III, pages 280—304, 315—332.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE LOWER OXUS AND THE RIVERAIN DISTRICTS OF AFGHÂN TURKISTÂN.

The Oxus or Amu Daria may be said to enter Afghân Turkistân just below the junction of the Kundûz river. From this point westwards to the Russo-Afghân frontier below Khamiâb it serves as the boundary between Bokhâra and Afghânistân. In this part of its course the Oxus is a fine stream, somewhat resembling the Indus or the Jhelum, and generally speaking from a thousand yards to a mile in width. The winter volume of water may be estimated at two-thirds to three-fourths of the summer. In most places there is at least 25 feet of water in the main channel from May to August. The average current in flood is about 4 miles an hour, but it varies in places from 2½ to 5 miles. The left or Afghân bank is low and flat, and, except in the Khwaja Salûr district, is generally speaking a reedy swamp near the river, with a belt of jungle between the swamp and the edge of the elevated sandy desert which runs along the whole northern front of Afghân Turkistân. The right or Bokharân bank is higher, drier, more fertile, and better populated. The only tributaries of any importance below the Kundûz river are the Kalirnihaog and Surkhân, both from the north.

There are roads along both banks of the Oxus. Of that on the right bank we know little, but it is said to be a very good road, with good communication leading to Shirabâd, Kalâdian, Kurgân Tapa, and Kolâb. On the Afghân side the road is not very good. It keeps as much as possible between the low jungly ground and the foot of the sand-hills. The soil here is soft as a rule, and the marching would be very hard on artillery horses or wheeled vehicles of any kind. If time allowed, the worst places might be improved by laying down brushwood, which is always abundant. In two places the sand-hills come down to the river, *viz.*, between Choh-hâsh and Tâsh Guzar, and again above Kaldâr, and add greatly to the difficulties of the route. In spite of the proximity of the river, good water is seldom available, as the intervening reed swamps make it impossible to get at the river itself.

From the mouth of the Kundûz river to Kaldâr there are no inhabitants. Fifty miles lower down at Choh-hâsh the Shor Tapa district begins, and extends as far as Kilif, but cultivation is intermittent and population scanty. From just above Kilif cultivation is continuous. As regards supplies, a force operating along the Oxus above Kilif would be entirely dependent on Mazâr-i-Sharîf and Tashkurghân, unless the Bokharân side could be indented on. Fire-wood is, however, abundant everywhere, and grass might be procurable in spring.

As regards the climate of the riverain tracts, the heat, though considerable in summer, is not to be compared with that of India, while the winter is not usually very severe, though the Oxus has been known to be frozen over. Fever is almost unknown in the settled tracts, though doubtless the fens are unhealthy. The flood season lasts for about five months from April to September.

The population of the riverain tracts is limited, and consists almost entirely of Turkomans, not freebooters like those of Merv and Askâbâd, but a fine, manly, industrious race of peaceful peasants. On the Afghân side their settlements extend from the Russian frontier at Basîga to Pata Kesar, above which there is only one small colony at Kaldâr. Administratively the riverain country is divided into three districts—Khwaja Salûr, Shor Tapa, and Kaldâr—each of which is described separately below. The total population is estimated by Colonel Maitland at 3,560 families, or less than 20,000 persons. There is no reason why population, together with cultivation, should not be considerably increased, as the whole river front, now covered with *padak* and tamarisk jungle, has once been cultivated, and might be made as fertile and prosperous as Khamiâb or the Bokharân districts. Below Khamiâb, all through Bokharân territory, the river banks are more or less cultivated.

## KHWAJA SALAR.

This is the principal of the Afghan riverain districts. It is considered a sub-district of Akehá. It extends for about 35 miles along the river, the breadth of the cultivated strip being from half a mile to 5 miles. At 4½ miles above the Kilif ferry cultivation ceases. Between the cultivation and the river are flats covered with reeds and grass liable to inundation. These flats, as well as the *chul* (desert), afford pasturage for sheep and cattle.

The inhabitants are Turkomans, half Arsáris and half of Karkin stock. There are about 2,000 families in all. They do not live in villages, but in scattered homesteads, a number of which form one township, watered by its own canal. The people dwell in *kirgahs*, and the numerous mud buildings are all cattle-sheds or storehouses. The 18 townships of the district are grouped together in four divisions, namely, Khamiáb, Dáli, Karkin, and Akjoia or Kilif. The people are quiet, laborious, and orderly, and the district has a thriving and prosperous appearance. Agriculture is dependent on the canals which are flood-water canals, filling about the end of May, and dry again before September. The principal grains are *jowara* and *bajra*. There is no rice and very little wheat or barley. Cotton is largely grown, but sericulture appears to be the main support of the people. Mulberries are largely grown for the purpose, and the silk of the *lah-i-áb*,\* as it is called, is famous in Central Asia. Sheep-farming is also largely practised, the district containing nearly 60,000 sheep. There are also a fair number of horses and camels, say 2,000 of each. No supplies, except mutton and vegetables, could be counted on, as the grain is only sufficient for local consumption. The chief trees are the mulberry and the willow.

The only ferry now in the district is at Kilif. The Bosága or Ak Khum ferry is within Bokháran territory, while the Karkin or Khwaja Salár ferry has been discontinued for many years. The principal roads to the Khwaja Salár district are (1) that from Andkhai to Khamiáb; (2) from Akehá to Kilif; (3) Balkh to Kilif; (4) Mazár-i-Sharíf to Kilif.

The cultivated strip along the river is peculiarly close country, much intersected by canals, mud walls, and ditches. The main canals are 12 to 15 feet wide, and have high spoil banks, and even the smallest are 5 feet deep. Guns and cavalry would thus be confined to the roads, which are, however, usually good, and cross the canals by excellent timber bridges. Practically troops would keep to the main road from Karki to Kilif, which runs between the cultivation and the sand-hills.

The north bank of the Oxus, opposite Khwaja Salár, is very similar in character, except that the cultivation is further from the river, and is backed by the spurs of the Koh-i-Tán instead of by sand and plain. The people both there and in Bosága are Arsári Turkomans.

## SHOR TAPA.

This is the riverain tract immediately above Kilif on the Oxus. It is a sub-district of Mazár-i-Sharíf. It generally resembles Khwaja Salár, but is much less enclosed and wooded. The population consists of about 1,600 families of Arsári Turkomans. The produce of the district resembles that of Khwaja Salár, but the silk industry is not as fully developed. The sub-district possesses about 50,000 sheep and 1,200 camels.

## KALDAR.

This is a newly established settlement, about due north of Tashkurghán. It contained in 1886 about 60 families, mostly Karkin Turkomans, who came from Karkin in 1891-92. There are also a few Uzbaks from Kabádián. The people are industrious; and as there is plenty of good land, the colony will doubtless flourish.

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\* *Lah-i-áb*, the waterside, a name given to the riverain tracts generally.



There are four recognized ferries on the Oxus between Afghán Turkistán and Bokhára, namely :—

Kisht Tapa or Aiwanj,  
Patah Kesar,  
Choshka Guzur,  
Kilif,

while just below Khamiáb we have in Bokháran territory the ferry of Ák Khum. The old Khwaja Salár ferry of Burnes' day no longer exists. On this subject Major Peacocke observes that the original trade route from Herát to Bokhára was along the left bank of the Oxus to Karkí, where the river was crossed. As the Kara Turkomans became more powerful, this route became more and more exposed to their depredations, and caused caravans to seek a passage higher up at Khwaja Salár, which was on the direct line from Maimana. But about 20 years ago (1865) the channel at the Khwaja Salár ferry began to change, and the width of the river at this point kept on increasing, so much so that after a few years this ferry had to be finally abandoned.

The ferries above mentioned may be described in detail.

#### KILIF FERRY.

At Kilif the Oxus flows in a single channel, 30 yards wide in winter and about 500 in summer, when in full flood. An isolated, low, narrow limestone ridge, which extends about 5 miles in a south-west direction into the desert here, abuts on the left bank, ending in two rocky promontories about 400 yards apart, and enclosing between them a rocky ravine. This ridge reappears on the north bank in the form of several detached mounds and ridges stretching across the plain to the lower spurs of the Koh-i-Tán. The southernmost of these detached rocks is surmounted by the rude brick castle of Kilif. The narrowness formed by these outcrops of rock are about a quarter of a mile long, and both above and below them the Oxus expands to a width of about three-fourths of a mile with islands, sandbanks, and backwaters. On the downstream side of the two rocky ledges aforesaid are two small bays, one on each bank, forming natural harbours, which are utilized for ferry purposes. The current at this point is in winter about 3 miles an hour; in summer about 4 miles. The river commences to rise in April, and continues in flood till the end of August. The general rise is here about 10 feet. During the flood season the passage is difficult.

At Kilif there are three ferry boats on each side (15' x 12' x 2½' free board), also a new *kaiak*. Each boat is towed by two horses, and the crossing is effected in about 20 or 25 minutes.

When Balkh flourished, the great trade route thence to Bokhára lay through Kilif, as it offered not only the best crossing, but was the shortest route by 9 miles, and crossed the drift sand where it was only 9 miles wide instead of 16. The advantages of the ferry at Kilif are shown by the fact that a boat can ferry a caravan across at the rate of one or two trips an hour, while at the other ferries the rate would be only two or three trips a day.

Kilif undoubtedly offers one of the best points, if not *the* best for throwing a floating bridge across the Oxus. It may be mentioned here that the right bank is lower than the left, and that even the Kilif fort, which rises 100 feet above the plain, is commanded by the rocky promontories on the south bank. Kilif would almost certainly be the point of crossing for any force acting in the triangle formed by Jam, Bokhára, and Kilif itself.

The following remarks by Major Peacocke on the facilities for crossing at Khamiáb will be useful :—

Technically Kilif is the best point for a military crossing. The river is at its narrowest; the banks are sound and accessible. At least 20 large boats could be collected for rafting or bridging as well as suitable timber. With short notice probably a *lakh* of willow logs 30' x 1' x 1½' could be procured in the neighbourhood. *Manj* ropes could also be obtained, as *manj* grows in the locality. Tactically it would be impossible to force a passage from the north to the south bank in the face of an enemy, while the rocky hills on the south bank would completely cover a passage from the left to the right bank.

### СНОПКИ GUZAR FERRY.

This is the first ferry up-stream above Kilif, which is about 20 miles distant. The breadth of the river is here about three-fourths of a mile, but broken by shoals or mud banks according to the state of the river. The boats cross diagonally through these shoals, and the course is quite a mile long. The main channel here is under the Bokhâran bank. The current is about 4 miles an hour. Below the ferry the river widens to nearly  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles. There are four boats maintained here on each side of the river. These boats are worked by long rough sweeps and by poling over the shallows. Besides the eight ferry boats there is one *kaiak*. Chodiki Guzar is the ordinary ferry for travellers to Shirabâd and beyond; but caravans almost always go to Kilif, with which from a military point of view it is not to be compared; but the Russians might easily pass a brigade over at this point if they wished to create a diversion while the main passage was effected at Kilif.

### PATAH KESAR FERRY.

This ferry lies almost due north of Mazâr-i-Sharîf. It takes its name from the district of Patah Kesar on the Bokhâran shore, where there are several small hamlets of Uzbaks and Turkomans. On the Afghân bank there are no inhabitants save the boatmen. At the ferry there are two boats on each side. The ferry is but little used, except by pilgrims to Mazâr. The river at the ferry is in one channel a thousand yards wide, the depth varying from 10 to 50 feet. In winter the greatest depth is 20 feet; current 4 miles an hour. The river here is on the whole well adapted for bridging, as the water is unbroken, and has an even flow, while the banks are firm up to the water's edge. Timber is plentiful on the left bank. This same *jungal* would give cover to troops opposing a crossing from the north bank, but owing to the proximity of the ferry to Mazâr, which is only 36 miles distant, it is not at all an unlikely place for troops from Shirabâd to attempt a passage.

### KISHT TAPA OR AIWANJ FERRY.

Kisht Tapa is a mound on the left bank of the Oxus north-east of Tashkurghân, and the ferry takes its name therefrom; but in summer the crossing is downstream at Aiwanj, close to the mouth of the Kaliruihang. The width of the river is only about 700 yards at Kisht Tapa, but in summer the rocks in its bed are covered, and dangerous broken water formed. In winter these rocks rise above the water, and the river is then in two channels divided by a rocky island. At Aiwanj the crossing is nearly a mile wide; the depth is considerable, and the current 4 miles an hour. There are two boats at this ferry, one on each side. This ferry is on the main route to Kabâdiân. At Kisht Tapa tradition says there was formerly a masonry bridge, and there is no doubt one could easily be made there. It is also the nearest point on the Oxus from Tashkurghân.

The ferry boats in use on the Oxus are of two classes. The larger is called *kima*; the smaller *kaiak*. The *kimas* are those in ordinary use at the ferries. They are usually from 45' to 50' long, 12' to 14' beam, and  $2\frac{1}{2}$ ' to 3' deep, flat-bottomed, rough, but strong, with sides 6" thick, capable of carrying a field gun and limber, ten or twelve cavalry with horses, luggage, or 100 infantry. They are well adapted for bridging, but not many are available. At Kilif the motive power is supplied by the horses slung at the bows and towing the boats; elsewhere as a rule by large paddles or sweeps.

The *kaiaks* are nearly as long, but much lighter, the dimensions being approximately—length 34', beam 5½', interior depth 2¼', thickness of sides 2", flat-bottomed, bow and stern alike, and very sharp. They are light and strong, but rather crank. They are worked up and down-stream chiefly by poling, and sails are never used. These *kaiaks* would be suitable for rafting or for carrying a light roadway. A *kaiak* by itself could carry about 25 men. The number of boats available is very small. Altogether there are only 21 *kimas* on about 130 miles of river—that is, between Pata Kesar and Karkî.

The ferries in Bokhâran territory are at Khum, Khatas, Mukri, and Karkî.

At Karkí there were in 1886 three boats; at the other ferries one or two at most. It would take time to bring boats up-stream from points below Karkí; but as a bridge of boat at Kilif would immensely facilitate operations, doubtless *Kaiaks* are rather more numerous. There are said to be 45 at Karkí alone, so that there is no doubt a boat bridge of some sort could be made if required at Kilif.

Besides boats, *masak* rafts are used for crossing the Oxus, and probably the Russians could easily collect 4,000 *masaks* at any point between Chaharjui and Kilif; and 15 or 20 *masaks* are required to make a raft 8 feet square capable of carrying ten or twelve infantry.

There is practically no boat traffic above Kilif, though the river is quite navigable. On this subject the Russian Admiral Bykoff has reported that the Oxus is practicable for light draught steamers up to the mouth of the Wakish, while large boats and steam launches can ascend the Áksarai, Wákish, and Kafirnihang for a considerable distance. There would be very little difficulty about fuel, as there is plenty of *padak*, a very suitable wood for the purpose.

Apart from the fact of the Oxus being the political boundary, there are strategical considerations which make it a feature of the first importance, whether it be regarded in the light of a line of defence or of a secondary base. Along the north or right bank we know the communications are fairly good, and that as far up as the mouth of the Kafirnihang there are practically no difficulties. The *kafilá* road from Bokhára to Kilif lies mostly through uninhabited *chol* with brackish water at the several halting places. The distance is about 22 miles, and is reckoned as eleven stages, seven of which are through the *chol*. The road is good for camels the whole way. The road from Samarkand and Karshi joins in at Beshkán, the 5th stage from Bokhára; and this road would probably be used by the Russians in preference to that *riá* Shirabád, as by it all hills and passes would be avoided. As, however, the desert is mostly a flat *pat* of clay, there are probably considerable difficulties in the matter of water. From Karshi to Jam the road is fairly easy, and is known to be practicable for artillery (*vide* page 200, Volume II, Afghan Boundary Commission Records). On the whole it is highly improbable that these roads would be much used for the Russian advance as long as they had the railway to depend upon. The main Russian advance would certainly be made from Chaharjui *riá* Karkí and the left bank of the Oxus, and it is probable that when war comes, offensive operations will be facilitated by a branch line running to Hozága, or at least to Karkí. The roads leading northward from the Oxus would therefore only become strategically important if an offensive movement against Russia were in contemplation. In that case the Kilif ferry as the best point of passage on the river becomes of first-rate importance, especially as it lies on the direct road to Bokhára and turns the mountain ranges, ending in the Koh-i-Tán, which form the right or western watershed of the Surkhán. If, however, it were intended to operate in the country east of those hills, making Shirabád the primary objective, the Patah Kesar ferry would probably be selected. Similarly this ferry might be useful to the Russians for a diversion against Tashkurghán. The Kisht Tapa or Aiwang ferry would only be used in case of a movement by us directed against Kabédian. It may be mentioned here that, besides the points of passage above mentioned, Termiz was probably at one time important, as it is said that there was once a bridge there. Termiz is on the right bank; it was certainly at one time an important city as testified by the numerous ruins, and it is equally certain that the locality is favorable for a permanent bridge, as the river here flows in a permanent channel less than a thousand yards broad, and the bottom is believed to be suitable for foundations. Termiz lies on the direct line from Shirabád to Mazár-i-Sharif. The road along the south bank of the Oxus has already been described. The approaches to it from the south lead either to Khamiáb, Kilif, Choskhi Guzar, Pata Kesar, or Kisht Tapa. To Khamiáb there are the roads from Andkhai and Akchá through Jar Kuduk; to Kilif there are roads from Akchá, Balkh, and Mazár-i-Sharif; at Choskhi Guzar a road from Mazár reaches the Oxus; to Pata Kesar roads from both Mazár and



Tashkurghán join in, while Kisht Tapa is on the high road from Tashkurghán to Kabádian. As, however, the main attack from the north must come through Kilif, whether the river is crossed there, or whether the left bank of the Oxus from Chahárjui is made the line of approach, the only point for consideration is whether Kilif offers a suitable position for opposing that attack. Tactically it may do so, and strategically it certainly would do so if the defending force could reckon on being numerically equal to their opponents; but as this is most unlikely, and as time would certainly not be on our side, it is useless to consider this question at present, and it must suffice for us to know that the main Russian attack on Afghán Turkistán must be made by way of Kilif.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE WESTERN DISTRICTS OF TURKISTÁN.

In this chapter I have included all that portion of Turkistán which lies to the west of the great central plateau and south of the Turkistán plain, that is to say, the basins of the Andkhov river or Áb-i-Maimana and of the river of Sar-i-Púl. The whole of this tract is more or less mountainous, or at least hilly. Westward of the Balkh-Áb we have first the comparatively low hills and undulations of Sang Chárák backed by higher mountains; next, the higher and bolder, but grassy and down-like, hills of Sar-i-Púl; and, lastly, Maimana with its glens, rapidly sinking into low downs; whilst as a background to the whole we have the lofty range of the Band-i-Turkistán. West of the Maimana stream and its branches begins the great *chol* or Turkomán desert, so that this portion of Turkistán abuts on the Russian empire as well as on the Afghán province of Herát.

In a military sense this portion of the province has not the same important or interesting aspect that the rest of the province presents, but still it has its value, as through it run the only practicable lines of communication between Turkistán and Herát, and for the Russians the only lateral line south of the railway between their Herát line of advance and that by the Oxus.

The most easterly district in this region is that of Sang Chárák, and it will be convenient to describe this first.

#### SANG CHÁRAK.

This includes Zári and Amrákh, which geographically belong to the Band-i-Amír drainage; the remainder of the district belongs to the Sar-i-Púl basin. The population is estimated at over 4,800 families, of which about 2,700 are Uzbaks and nearly 900 are Tajiks. There are also a good many Hazáras, Kibchaks, &c.

Sang Chárák is a beautiful and fertile district. Excellent grazing ground alternating with rich valleys. Grass is abundant everywhere in spring, and is obtainable all the year round in the upper part of the country. Camel forage is also fairly plentiful all over the lower country, except in winter. Colonel Maitland estimated that the district could supply annually about 60,000 maunds *átá* and 45,000 barley.

There is a good road from Ák Kupruk on the Band-i-Amír to Sang Chárák. The country between consists of grassy ridges, hollows, and downs with paths in every direction. All arms could manœuvre over such a country.

About 20 miles from Ák Kupruk the large and fertile valley of Allaghán is reached, which is part of the Sang Chárák district. The valley is about three-fourths of a mile broad and all cultivated. The next important valley is Tukzár, which is filled with orchards and villages. It shares with Haibak the reputation of being the healthiest and pleasantest place in Afghán Turkistán. The elevation of the district generally is between 3,000 and 4,000 feet.

At Sazai Kalán the direct road from Mazár-i-Sharíf comes in. It leaves the Band-i-Amír at Paikám Dara. North of Sazai Kalán the country changes its character; the hills, instead of being low, easy, and grassy, become high, stony, and barren, almost devoid of water, and even grass is scarce. This tract extends north for about 30 miles to the Turkistán plain.

#### SAR-I-PÚL.

The river of Sar-i-Púl is formed by two streams which unite a few miles above the town. One of these drains Sang Chárák; the other is the stream of Astaráb and Faoghán. The district also includes Kurchi, Darzáb, and Guzriwán districts draining into the Shirín Tagao, one of the two principal sources of

the Andkhol river. The total population of the district has been estimated at 9,700 families, say 50,000 souls, of whom about half are Uzbaks. There are also a large number of Tajiks and a few Hazáras, Arabs, and Turkománs. The Tajiks of *Fozghán* are scarcely distinguishable from *Firozkohis*.

The valley and glens are fertile, and appear to produce large quantities of wheat and barley. It is calculated that 12,000 maunds of *átá* and 12,000 maunds of barley could be collected in the district, which would feed an Anglo-Indian division for a fortnight. There are no camels, and the transport animal of the district is the bullock. The town of *Sar-i-Púl* stands in a valley nearly three miles wide, bounded by low hills, and filled with orchards and villages. It is a flourishing place, with a large *bághát*; but the bazar is a small one, consisting of about 100 shops. The town proper is small. It has a miserable wall, but it is surrounded on three sides by a stream in a deep bed and a ditch of running water. The river is on the fourth side (the east), the fort and town proper being entirely on its left bank. The citadel has considerable command, but no strength; and, though it dominates the town like a mediæval castle, it is not a place one would think seriously of defending against a civilized enemy. The river here even in winter is 20 or 30 yards broad, several feet deep, with a rapid current, and not easily fordable. The banks are generally high and steep, but there are several good wooden bridges practicable for field guns.

The road from *Sar-i-Púl* to *Maimana* goes through *Kurchi* and *Belchirág*, sub-districts of *Sar-i-Púl*. *Kurchi* is a small walled town 5,600 feet above the sea, inhabited chiefly by Tajiks. *Belchirág* is on the *Ab-i-Gurziwán*, a considerable stream draining the *Gurziwán* sub-district, and issuing from the hills immediately south of the village. The river is a formidable obstacle from its depth (10' to 15'), though narrow (20' or so). The valley here is a mile wide, but contracts into a defile just below *Belchirág*. Down this goes the road to *Maimana*, while up-stream is the road to *Gurziwán*, and thence to *Chíras* and *Chahársada* on the Upper *Murgháb*. From these again there are roads to *Daolatýár*, which is thus connected with *Maimana* and *Sar-i-Púl*; but all these roads are hilly and difficult, and in winter are blocked by snow. The road from *Sar-i-Púl* to *Maimana* is on the whole fairly good, though there are several defiles and one *kotal*. We know that heavy guns have been taken along it, and that it is almost practicable for artillery in its present condition. The *Mirza Walang Kotal* is the only serious difficulty. From the middle of December to the end of March this route would be blocked by snow. The distance from *Mazár* to *Sar-i-Púl* is about 79 miles, and from *Sar-i-Púl* to *Maimana* 90 miles, or 169 in all. Travellers usually prefer the level *Shibarghán-Daolatábád* road, which is shorter; but it involves 40 miles of waterless desert west of *Shibarghán*, and in summer the *Sar-i-Púl* road is certainly preferable for troops.

#### MAIMANA.

This district is a little Uzbek state, which still (1891) retains semi-independence of a limited nature. It forms the extreme south-western portion of *Aighán Turkistán*, lying between *Sar-i-Púl* and the *Murgháb* district of *Herát*. Generally speaking, the *Band-i-Turkistán* is the southern limit of the district, but the small *kerozkohi* territory of *Bandar* south of that range also belongs to *Maimana*. An important part of *Maimana* is the adjacent *chól*, which is the great winter and spring grazing ground of the country. The capital of this little state is the town of *Maimana*, which is of considerable area, the perimeter of its walls equalling that of *Herát*, and it has a high and imposing ark or citadel. Nevertheless it is a poor place, its houses are mean and ruinous, and its bazar indifferent. The place is said to contain about 4,000 inhabited houses. *Maimana* stands (2,600' above the sea) in a comparatively broad, but bare, treeless-looking valley, among low grassy hills, which on one side are within rifle range; but even without this defect it would not be a place of any military strength. In 1876 it was besieged by the Afgháns, and the town sacked and depopulated. Against modern field artillery the place would have even less chance than it had then, as it is commanded at a distance of 600 yards. Merck give the following account of the place:—

The valley (about 2 miles wide) is bounded by low cliffs and hillocks, being in fact the rolling downs of the usual grassy steppe on both sides. These downs are cultivated within a

distance of about 10 miles from the town. The land bears good wheat and barley crops without irrigation. Near the right side of the valley a shallow watercourse flanks the town. At no time does it contain much water. (In winter it is about 3' broad and 6" deep). Maimana depends for water on wells. The city is completely commanded from the Talash Khán hill on the north side at about 600 yards, but the houses are all provided with domed roofs and underground chambers. The plain round the town walls is kept free of the walled orchards and gardens that usually surround an Uzbek town. The town forms an irregular oblong about 1,000 yards by 1,700, and is protected by a mud wall.

Peacocks gives the following account of the defences :—

The city wall, built of mud and sun-dried bricks, is 2 feet high and 12 feet thick at the bottom. A V-shaped dry ditch 20 feet wide and 15 feet deep surrounds the wall at 20 feet or so from its foot. The scarp of this ditch is surrounded by a mud breast wall arranged for musketry. A similar ditch runs round the inside of the main wall. The Balá Hissar has about 100 yards diameter, and is built on an artificial mound 25 feet high. Its walls are about 30 feet high. The foot of the mound is surrounded by a ditch 30 feet wide and 12 feet deep.

Colonel Maitland points out the defects of the place from a military point of view :—

The weak mud wall which could not resist field artillery, the command given by the Talash Khán ridge 600 yards away, the want of flanking defence to the ditches, the uncovered nature of the gates, and the cover afforded by a water channel to an attack from the east side. The sole advantages possessed by the defence are the generally open nature of the plain and the good overhead cover within the city.

On the whole it would seem absurd to hold the city against an invader.

In 1886 the garrison consisted of—

					Men.
3 battalions	...	...	...	...	1,500
2 Afghan troops of cavalry	...	...	...	...	200
1 battery (6 guns)	...	...	...	...	100
3 <i>batiraks</i> of <i>khasadars</i>	...	...	...	...	500

The valley of Maimana is about 10 miles long, and at both ends it is contracted by hills, and becomes an ordinary glen. The river has a bed about 50 yards wide with low banks. In flood time the stream is up to a horse's chest.

North of Maimana are the sub-districts of Námúsá and Langar, mostly colonized by Turki-speaking Baluchis. West and south-west of Maimana lie the sub-districts of Almar, Kairár, Karai, and Chichaktn. The last named is in the Murgháb drainage, thus forming an exception to the general principle by which all the Oxus drainage belongs to Turkistán and the Murgháb drainage to Herát. North-east of Maimana lie the sub-districts of Shirín Tagao and Khair-ábád, both in the basin of the river known by the former name; while north of Khairábád lies Daulatábád, which, though in the Áb-i-Andkhol basin, is attached administratively to Ákchá.

The whole population of the Maimana State may be taken at 10,000 families, of which more than half are Uzbaks. Indeed, the whole population may be said to be Uzbek in feeling, and would gladly welcome a Russian occupation. The principal productions of the district are wheat, barley, and cotton. Sheep are very numerous, especially in the Karai country. The probable surplus of grain stocks available for troops is estimated at 30,000 *maunds á'd*, 20,000 *maunds* barley, and 50,000 *maunds khusa*. There is also plenty of good grass. Bullocks are the ordinary transport of the district.

One very important feature of the district is the grazing ground known as the Maimana *chol*. The soil of the *chol* is sandy, firmest in the high ground and loosest in the low flat ground. The snow and spring rains produce a rich vegetation eminently fit for sheep-grazing. There is also excellent firewood in places. Though deprived of surface water, by digging wells water can nearly always be obtained, and the low *chol* north of Maimana is covered with wells.

Maimana, as already stated, lies on the high road to Herát, from which it is distant 229 miles *via* Balá Murgháb, Kushk, and the Bába pass. It can, however, easily be avoided, and the strategical position of either Daulatábád or



Khairābād appears to be better for covering the communication between Herāt and Turkistán. A direct road from Maimana leads to Herāt over the Band-i-Turkistán by the Tildān Kotal and the Dasht-i-Lalabai, but it is difficult and little used, except for horsemen and pack bullocks.

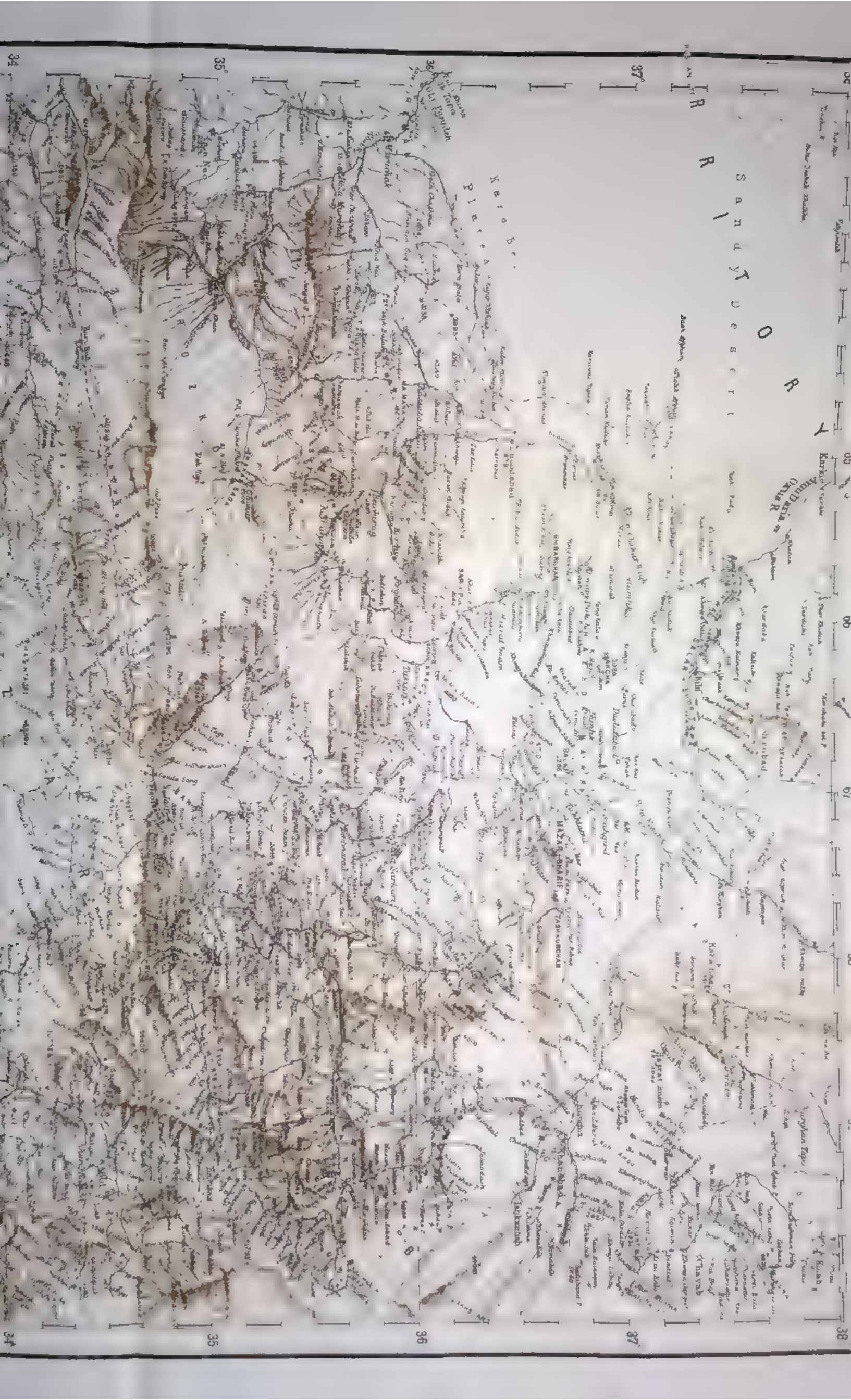
I may best conclude this brief account of the districts above described by pointing out that the drainage of Sang Chārak and Sar-i-Pūl finds its way to Shibarghān in the great plain of the Turkistán, while the Shirīn Tagao, the Ab-i-Maimana, and the Kaisār river unite to form the Andkhoi river. Just above the final junction of streams lies Daolatābād on the right bank of the Shirīn Tagao, and astride of the roads from Maruchak and Bālā Murghāb to Shibarghān. Daolatābād is only a small mud fort peopled by Arsāri Turko-mans, but it is new (built in 1884) and in good repair. It is a walled square of 50 yards side with towers at the corners. The Shirīn Tagao is here about 8 yards wide and 3 feet deep flowing in a bed 20 feet or more below the plain. It does not dry up in the hot season. It is a difficult stream to cross, as the bottom is soft, current strong, and the banks broken and steep. From Daolatābād it is 47 miles to Shibarghān, 12½ to Bālā Murghāb *viā* Chahārshamba, 39 miles to Maimana up the Shirīn Tagao, and 35 to Andkhoi. The valley down which the Ab-i Andkhoi flows averages 2 to 3 miles in width, and is level and smooth as a billiard table, with undulating downs on either side. An excellent road runs down the east side of the valley, which was in old days the main trade route between Maimana and Bokhāra; but there is no cultivation below Daolatābād, whereas above it is closely cultivated, while villages and clumps of trees are numerous. Two miles below Daolatābād, where the Kaisār valley comes in, there is a broad expanse of plain at least 4 miles wide. Below Jalaiur and Daolatābād the *chal* on both sides rapidly loses its broken hilly character, and subsides gradually towards the north in broad rolling undulations. The watershed between the Murghāb and Oxus drainage is crossed at the Kaisār plain. This plain is about 7 miles long and the same wide; it is well cultivated, and there are many villages, but being 4,200 feet above the sea, the climate is comparatively cold and bleak. On its east side the plain drains to the Kaisār river; on the west to the Chahārshamba valley. Chahārshamba itself lies 18 miles west of Kaisār. It is only 2,500 feet above sea, and in consequence of its low elevation was selected for winter quarters by the Afghān Boundary Commission in 1885-86. It is a wide valley bounded by low hills.

I have already commented on the strategical relation of this part of the Turkistán province to the great lateral road between Herāt and the Turkistán plain, but it is necessary to observe that from December to March it would be hardly possible to carry out military operations on a large scale partly on account of the snow in the hill districts, and partly because the valleys would then prove heavy and difficult travelling, which indeed would not be improved by the spring rains, so that probably till April all large operations would necessarily cease.

There is one other important point to remember. It is that the whole submontane region between the Band-i-Amīr and Maimana possesses great natural advantages, being fertile, well watered, and well grassed, while troops could be cantoned in a healthy climate at almost any desired altitude.

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SANDY DESERT

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CUSTODY AND DISPOSAL OF SECRET BOOKS, REPORTS, &c., ISSUED BY THE INTELLIGENCE BRANCH,  
QUARTER MASTER GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT IN INDIA.

The attention of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief having been called to the want of system in the custody, use, and disposal of secret works, &c., His Excellency desires that in future the following regulations may be strictly adhered to:—

- (a) Officials to whom works of a secret nature are issued will be held personally responsible for their safe custody, and they must be very careful to keep them under lock and key, and under no circumstances to leave them where they are likely to be observed by people who should have no access to them. They will submit annually (on the 1st January) to the Intelligence Branch a return showing that such matter is still in their possession.
- (b) When an official to whom a secret work has been issued vacates his appointment or is transferred or proceeds on duty or leave (out of India for any period, or in India for any period exceeding three months), all secret works in his possession, if held in his official capacity, must be personally made over to his successor (be he temporary or permanent), and a report submitted to the Intelligence Branch by the officer handing over the issue showing that this has been done. The following is the form of report to be made:—

Certified that I have this day delivered over to.....the following secret works issued to me by the Intelligence Branch:—

No.	Full title of work.	No. of vols.	No. of copies.	REMARKS: Explaining reason of handing over.

Place and date.

Signature.....

Signature of receiving officer.....



In the case of officers of the District Staff, these reports must be sent through the G. O. C.

- (c) In the case of an official leaving his station under circumstances other than above stated, it is optional for him to hand over the secret works in his charge to another officer with the above prescribed formalities; but, if he does not do so, he is as responsible for them during his absence as he is during his presence at his station.
- (d) Personal or complimentary issues of secret works will be held by the recipient until his departure from India, when the secret matter will be returned to the Intelligence Branch for safe custody, or special permission obtained for its retention.

ARMY HEAD QUARTERS; }  
Simla, 1st October 1891. }

JAMES BROWNE, Major-General,  
Quarter Master General in India.



# PART II.

## AFGHÁN TURKISTÁN.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### INTRODUCTION.

The second great geographical division into which our subject is divided is that commonly known as "Afghán Turkistán," a region which perhaps it is more correct to speak of as simply "Turkistán." In a military study of this nature it is not necessary to enter into the early history of this province, and I need only remark that it is a conquered region inhabited by races alien to the Afgháns. For our information concerning it we are indebted entirely to the maps and reports of the Afghán Boundary Commission, and all previous information may be regarded as of little value, except from a political and historical point of view. I have specially relied on the information collected and collated by Lieutenant-Colonel P. J. Maitland and Major Peacocke, M.E., who were the Intelligence Officers attached to the Afghán Boundary Commission. Much indeed of this Part II is taken almost *verbatim* from their reports as well as from a lecture delivered by Colonel Maitland in 1889 at the United Service Institution, Simla.\* The deductions I have drawn are my own, based for the most part on the opinions of the above named officers, and they must not be regarded as in any sense an expression of the official view. They are simply personal opinions formed on good information, and expressed for the benefit of those who have neither the time nor the opportunity to study the question closely.

I have thought it best to begin with an introductory sketch of the whole region here under discussion, and then to give as briefly and succinctly as possible in separate chapters all such information as may enable the reader to gain a general knowledge of Afghán Turkistán. Each chapter deals with a particular part of the region, and forms as it were a distinct and separate study, which may be completed by turning to the references I have given in each chapter.

#### PHYSICAL FEATURES.

Geographically and naturally Turkistán embraces all the country draining to the Oxus from the south, exclusive of the drainage of the Áb-i-Kundúz and of Badakhshán generally; and one might reasonably suppose that all the country on the north side of the Hindú Kush, the Koh-i-Bābā, and the Dand-i-Turkistán belonged either to Badakhshán or Turkistán. When we come to boundaries and administrative divisions, we shall, however, see that this is not precisely the case, and that, as a matter of fact, the southern slopes of the Koh-i-Bābā are included in the province of Kábul.

Afghán Turkistán consists of two distinct regions, the hill country lying westward of the Koh-i-Chongur, and the great plain stretching from the foot of the hills to the Oxus. Much of the hill country is fertile, and the greater part well grassed. It has a great variety of climate, and enjoys an abundant

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\* Lecture on "Hindu-Afghan Frontier" by Major R. G. Barrow and Colonel P. J. Maitland.

rainfall. The principal features of this region are the lofty Koh-i-Chongur, which forms the boundary between Turkistán and Badakhshán; the great plateau extending between this range and the Balkh-Āb or Rūd-i-Band-i-Amír, which plateau is scamed by the deep valleys of Bamián, Saighán, Kámard, the Dara Yúsuf, and the Tashkurghán river; the long straight range at the foot of the plateau which dominates the Hazhda Nahr, and in the west the great barrier of the Band-i-Turkistán. The whole of this alpine region is described in the following Chapters II, III and IV.

The great plain is watered by the Tashkurghán, Band-i-Amir, Sar-i-Púl, and Andkhói rivers, which are expended in irrigation long before they can reach the Oxus. The fertile irrigated districts are separated from the Oxus by a strip of sandy desert which is not cultivable, but affords excellent sheep and camel grazing. There is also a strip of desert between the Sar-i-Púl and Andkhói rivers, while east of Tashkurghán the country is nearly all desert to the Kundúz river. Along the bank of the Oxus is a narrow strip of wooded and cultivable country, but only the western portion is actually populated. The rainfall over the plain is considerable, and assisted by irrigation renders the country one of great natural productivity. This portion of the province is described in Chapters IV and V.

As already said, the geographical limits of Turkistán do not correspond altogether with the political limits. I have therefore thought it advisable to specify the administrative divisions, and to give a general idea of the boundaries of the province.

#### BOUNDARIES.

It may be of some use to describe in detail the boundaries of the province. On the north it is bounded by the Oxus. On the north-west by the international frontier line laid down through the Turkoman *chol* by the Anglo-Russian Boundary Commission. The western and south-western boundaries are rather difficult to define. The Murgháb drainage as a rule belongs to Herát, but there are exceptions. The Chiehahtu valley, in which lies Chahúrshamba, belongs to Turkistán, while south of the Band-i-Turkistán the districts of Bandar, Mak, Chahársada, and Chirás belong either to Maimana or Sar-i-Púl, and therefore to Turkistán. The boundary line then crosses the western watershed of the Band-i-Amír river, and, running down a spur, strikes that river a few miles below Sulij, thus dividing the Yak Walang district of Bamián from the Kashán glen of Balkh-Āb. On the opposite side it ascends a spur to the watershed between the Dara Yúsuf drainage and the Yak Walang valley. Thus Walishán belongs to Turkistán.

At the Takazar Kotal on this main range, or thereabouts, the boundary line turns south, and crosses the main channel of the drainage, going east to Kámard above Jaozari, which belongs to Kámard. After this it follows the watershed of the Saighán drainage, running eastward to the Kotal Kotur Sum, where it is crossed by the main road from Bamián to Tashkurghán. The Bamián valley is divided from Saighán by the Ghandak mountain, and this here forms the boundary between the Kábul and Turkistán provinces, as far as the northernmost of the two peaks, which are its highest points. It then turns north-east, and runs along the western watershed of the Zarsang and Koftar Khána glens. Thus all the eastern part of the Koh-i-Ghandak draining to the Surkháb belongs to Bamián. The boundary crosses that river south of the junction of the Sughán stream, Baghik and its lands belonging to Bamián. It then follows the western watershed of the Dara Parkáf to the peak known as the Koh Jaolangáh, whence it follows the crest line of the Hindú Kush to the neighbourhood of the Chahárdar pass. Thence it turns back north, and then north-west to the Surkháb near Shutar Jangal; then it zigzags its way to the Koh-i-Chongur, which here forms the eastern boundary of Turkistán, dividing it from Ghorí of Badakhshán. From the Koh-i-Chongur its general direction is north-west, then north, running for the most part along the watershed between the Kundúz river and the Tashkurghán stream. It crosses the high road from Turkistán to Badakhshán at Khairabád, and strikes the Oxus at its junction with the Ak Sarai or Kundúz river.



## ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS.

The administrative divisions of Afghán Turkistán are as follows:—

- |                                                                    |                                        |     |                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----|-------------------------|
| (1) <i>Mazár-i-Sharíf</i> , which includes—                        |                                        |     |                         |
| (a) The town and neighbourhood                                     | ...                                    | ... | <i>Vide</i> Chapter IV. |
| (b) The riverain district of Shor Tápa                             | ...                                    | ... | " V.                    |
| (c) The Chahárkind in the hills south of the town                  |                                        |     |                         |
| (d) Buinakára                                                      | } Districts up the Band-i-Amír valley. |     |                         |
| (e) Kishindi                                                       |                                        |     |                         |
| (f) Ák Kupruk                                                      |                                        |     |                         |
| (g) Tunj                                                           |                                        |     | " III.                  |
| (2) <i>Balkh</i> , which includes the plain country round it       |                                        |     | " IV.                   |
| (3) <i>Ákchá</i> , which includes—                                 |                                        |     |                         |
| (a) The town and district so called                                | ...                                    | ... | " IV.                   |
| (b) The riverain district of Khwája Sálár                          | ...                                    | ... | " V.                    |
| (c) Daulatábád on the Andkhai river                                | ...                                    | ... | " VI.                   |
| (4) <i>Shibarghán</i>                                              | ...                                    | ... | " IV.                   |
| (5) <i>Andkhói</i>                                                 | ...                                    | ... | " IV.                   |
| (6) <i>Tashkurgán</i> , which includes—                            | ...                                    | ... | " IV.                   |
| (a) The small districts of Pir Nakhchir and Ghaznigak in the hills | ...                                    | ... | " III.                  |
| (b) Kaldar on the Oxus                                             | ...                                    | ... | " V.                    |

The above divisions include the whole of the plain country, the best part of which is known as the Hazhda Nahr.

- |                                                             |     |     |                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|--------------------------|
| (7) <i>Haibak</i>                                           | ... | ... | <i>Vide</i> Chapter III. |
| (8) <i>Dara Yúséf</i>                                       | ... | ... | " III.                   |
| (9) <i>Dóób</i> , including Irai                            | ... | ... | " III.                   |
| (10) <i>Saighán and Kámar</i>                               | ... | ... | " II.                    |
| (11) <i>Balkh-Áb</i> , the middle course of the Band-i-Amír | ... | ... | " III.                   |
| (12) <i>Sang Cháruk</i>                                     | ... | ... | " VI.                    |
| (13) <i>Sar-i-Púl</i>                                       | ... | ... | " VI.                    |
| (14) <i>Maimana</i>                                         | ... | ... | " VI.                    |

Besides the districts above enumerated, it has been found convenient to describe in this part of the work the following districts:—

- |                                      |                              |     |                         |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----|-------------------------|
| <i>Bamián</i> , belonging to Kábul   | ...                          | ... | <i>Vide</i> Chapter II. |
| <i>Yak Walang</i> belonging to Kábul | ...                          | ... | " III.                  |
| <i>Andardáb and Khinján</i>          | } All belonging to Badakshán |     |                         |
| <i>Doshi</i>                         |                              |     |                         |
| <i>Ghori</i>                         |                              |     | " II.                   |

The administrative head-quarters of the whole province of Turkistán is at Mazár-i-Sharíf, which has taken the place of the ancient Balkh as the capital of Turkistán.

## TOWNS.

The towns of Afghán Turkistán are:—

1. Mazár-i-Sharíf, the capital.
2. Tashkurgán.
3. Andkhói.
4. Ákchá.
5. Shibarghán.
6. Maimana.
7. Sar-i-Púl.
8. Tukzár (Sang Cháruk).
9. Haibak.

Of these, the most important are (1), (2), and (6). Sar-i-Púl is also a flourishing place; but (3), (4), and (5) are decayed cities with few inhabitants, and are now remarkable chiefly for their ancient walls and lofty citadels. (8) and (9) are small places, the former being quite a new town.

A peculiarity of these Turkistán towns is that they are usually surrounded by a mass of orchard suburbs known as the *bághdál*. In the case of Mazár, Tashkurghán, and Sar-i-Púl the town walls have completely disappeared in the *bághdál*, though the gates remain. At Maimana, however, there is no *bághdál*, it having vanished in the course of repeated sieges.

Tashkurghán is the commercial capital of Turkistán, while Mazár is the seat of government. The population of each is probably under 20,000, but they cover a considerable extent of ground. They are both practically indefensible, though they possess *arks* or citadels. The population of the remaining towns is very small, and indeed Haibak and Takzar scarcely deserve the appellation of towns. It may be here observed that Mazár-i-Sharíf owes its name, sanctity, and importance to its shrine and great mosque called the Mosalla. All these towns are more or less described in the chapters to which they naturally appertain; it would, therefore, be superfluous to say more here.

Balkh and Khulm, names famous from antiquity, no longer exist as cities, and, though they figure large on most of our maps, have about the same practical importance as Thebes or Babylon.

Takht-i-Púl is nothing more than a walled cantonment like Sherpur near Kábul.

#### POPULATION.

The population of the whole province is probably under 400,000 souls. That so scanty a population is spread over so large and fertile an area is due to famine and pestilence as well as to war and anarchy, for in 1872 and 1873 the province suffered severely from the former causes.

With regard to races, it may be said that the Turki-speaking people, namely, the Uzbaks and Turkomans, amount to about half, the other half being Hazáris, Tajiks, and Arabs, who all speak Persian. There are comparatively few Afgháns, but the immigration of that race is now being encouraged.

*Uzbaks.*—With regard to this race, Colonel Maitland was of opinion that they, especially those of the hill districts Maimana, Sar-i-Púl, &c., were not wanting in manly qualities, and were of very fair physique. They have broad, good-natured faces, but with a somewhat cunning expression. They are rather fair, and even sometimes ruddy. Every Uzbek can ride, and he always wears knee boots of soft untanned leather, large enough to allow of their being drawn on over thick felt stockings. They invariably dress in long striped garments of many colours, and are easily distinguished from the Turkománs by their small turbans, while the latter wear the sheepskin hat. Uzbaks always live in the dome-shaped felt tents called *owchs* or *khirgahs*, which they pitch in their walled orchards, and shift when so inclined. Mud houses are only considered fit for cattle or for store-houses. The Uzbaks seem more civilized than the Afgháns. In every district there are regular market days. The roads and bridges are attended to, the latter being capitally built. The Uzbaks also have something in the way of manufactures. They are good cultivators and handicraftsmen, and keep sheep, horses, and camels.

*Turkomans.*—As a rule Turkomans are darker, bigger, and bonier than Uzbaks. Those in Afghán Turkistán are all Arsaris, and they are a quiet, orderly tribe, exceedingly industrious, and admirable farmers. They make carpets and felts, and, like the Uzbaks, live in *owchs* (kibitkas). They dress like the Uzbaks, except for the sheepskin hat; but the colours they wear are quieter. The Arsaris live mostly along the Oxus, but in the spring they frequent the *chol* with their flocks.

*Arabs.*—The Turkistán Arabs very much resemble the Uzbaks, except that they speak Persian. They are all semi-nomadic, and generally well-to-do. They seem to own most of the camels.

*Hazdras*.—This race is to be found only in the hill districts, especially the higher tracts. For further information, *vide* Part IV (Kábul Province).

*Kibchaks*.—Are practically the same as Uzbaks.

Both Uzbaks and Turkomans, and also the Persian-speaking inhabitants of Turkistán, detest Afghan rule, and would readily welcome the Russians. A spontaneous revolt against the Afgháns is not very likely, as the people have been disarmed. Besides, they are neither warlike nor impetuous in temperament, but it is quite certain that they would join a Russian invader. Probably they would prefer English rule, but they fully understand that that solution is now scarcely to be hoped for.

#### CLIMATE.

There are four seasons, as in Europe, each lasting about three months. Winter is cold even in the plains, where there are occasional falls of snow. In the hills cold and snow naturally increase with the elevation, and above 8,600 or 9,000 feet snow lies till April, and the roads are seldom passable by troops till May. Spring is everywhere a season of rain. The heaviest rain is usually at the end of March, and for some weeks afterwards the roads are so deep in mud as to be almost impracticable for troops. After May the weather is clear and settled for all the summer and autumn up to November. Summer is hot in the plain country, the heat being greatest on the Oxus, but nowhere is it so severe as that of a Punjab hot weather. The hot season is, moreover, much shorter. In summer and autumn the plain country is generally unhealthy and malarial from irrigation and flooded ground acted on by a powerful sun. Tashkurghán, however, is said to be always healthy.

The hill districts have temperate and cool climates according to elevation, and there are many excellent sites for summer cantonments, one being within a single march of Mazár-i-Sharíf. By September the weather begins to cool again, and that month and October are most enjoyable. In November clouds appear with cold winds, rain, and sleet, but the winter seldom sets in with severity till Christmas.

The barley harvest is reaped in the plain at the end of May; the wheat early in June. In Haidak, Sang Chárák, Sar-i-Púl, and Maimana the harvests average about a fortnight later than those of the Hazhda Nahr, but in the high glens the wheat is not got in till October. The corn harvest of Dara Yúsúf appears to be in August and September. Autumn crops in the plain are gathered in November.

The Hindú Kush is passable from May to November, but on account of the swollen state of the streams the routes are not considered fully open till well on into June.

#### SUPPLIES AND TRANSPORT.

As regards supplies, although Turkistán does not now produce as much as Herát, there can hardly be a doubt as to the superior natural fertility of the province, and in ancient days, when Balkh was a great metropolis, it certainly supported a very large population. Even now, Colonel Maitland is of opinion that if a demand arose, and the necessary amount of land were brought into cultivation, the province might be equal to supporting two army corps, say 50,000 men, while *under present conditions* a British Indian division of nine or ten thousand fighting men might live on the province for about four months. With reference to transport, about 10,000 camels are available, but of this number probably not more than half could be permanently retained for duty with troops. In the hilly tracts *yabús* and bullocks, particularly the latter, are in general use. Of course, if the Turkoman country and Bokhára could be drawn upon, a still larger amount of transport and supplies would be available, so that the Russians anyhow would not meet with great difficulties under this head.

## ARMY.

It is useless to make any long statement about the Afghán army in Turkistán, as our information regarding the military affairs of the province since the time of Sardar Ishak Khan is imperfect. It is only necessary to remark that the bulk of the Turkistán army is concentrated at Maimana and Mazár-i-Sharif. At the former place the normal garrison would be a little over 2,000 regulars, while at the latter, including the troops at Takht-i-Púl, there might be 4,000 men. There are also small garrisons at Andkhot, Shibarghán, Akchá, Sar-i-Púl, and Tashkurghán. The total regular force in the province is probably never over 10,000 men. The regular troops are (or were) a provincial force garrisoning Turkistán and also Badakhshán, but recruited from the neighbourhood of Kábul. The men are therefore mostly Afgháns and Kábuli Tájiks. There was formerly a percentage of Uzbaks in the infantry, but none in the cavalry.

There is really no town or fortress in Turkistán where a prolonged resistance could be made in the event of invasion, and the best course for the Afghán army to take would certainly be to retire to the hill country, for it would be hopeless for it to give battle in the open plains. The troops from Maimana and Sar-i-Púl might retire by the Dara Yúsúf; the rest *viâ* Haibak.

## ROADS.

The roads in this region which most interest us are those leading from the Hazhda Nahr to Kábul and Herát respectively, and of course from our point of view the former are infinitely the more important. It will perhaps be easier to consider this subject from a defender's standpoint. It will be observed that all the routes from Kábul meet either in Bamián or at or near Doshi. The Irák, the Háji Gak, and the Shibar passes lead to Bamián, while the Hindú Kush passes, from the Chahárdar on the west to the Khawak on the east, unite on the Surkháb river between Dahán-i-Iskár and Doshi. Of the former group, the Irák and Háji Gak lead through Maidán, while the Shibar runs through Ghorband. Of the latter group, the Chahárdar, Walián, and Kaoshán start from Ghorband, while the remainder may be classed as routes from Panjshir; but all, whether from Ghorband or Panjshir, bifurcate from or near Charikár, so that the country about Charikár is strategically a most important point for concentrating the reserve of any forces or detachments observing the Hindú Kush passes. It will be useful to remember that Charikár is 42 miles or 4 marches from Kábul. The Irák and Háji Gak are practically the same line of route, and one which is the main *káfila* route to Turkistán. The distance by them from Kábul to Bamián may be taken at 105 miles or 10 marches.

The Shibar from its low altitude (under 10,000') is the only pass which can be crossed in winter, and might be made a good road. It is more roundabout than the Maidán routes, being 138 miles or 12 stages. Of the Hindú Kush passes, the Chahárdar is now infinitely the best, being, at least for the greater part, a made road. The Kaoshán is an old *káfila* road which has been already used by an invader, while the Khawak, though fairly good, is excessively circuitous. The distances by these three routes are:—

		Marches.*	Miles.
Kábul to Dahán-i-Kaián	<i>viâ</i> Chahárdar	...	12 132
"	Doshi	...	12 127
"	"	...	16 182

From Bamián and Doshi respectively lie the two main routes to Turkistán. The great road from Bamián is that by the Kara Kotal to Haibak, but there is also a branch road through Dara Yúsúf to Mazár-i-Sharif, and a route from Saighán to Doshi *viâ* the Surkháb. From Doshi there are two roads through the Ghorí district to Haibak—the one leading from Dahán-i-Iskár; the other by the valley of the Surkháb. After reuniting near Chashma Shir, the road ascends to the watershed between the Surkháb and Tashkurghán valleys at the Mirza Had Bel\* (elevation 4,555'), where there is a good defensive position facing west. Thence to Haibak it is easy going. Here the direct Bamián road comes in.

\* "Bel" is "Kotal."